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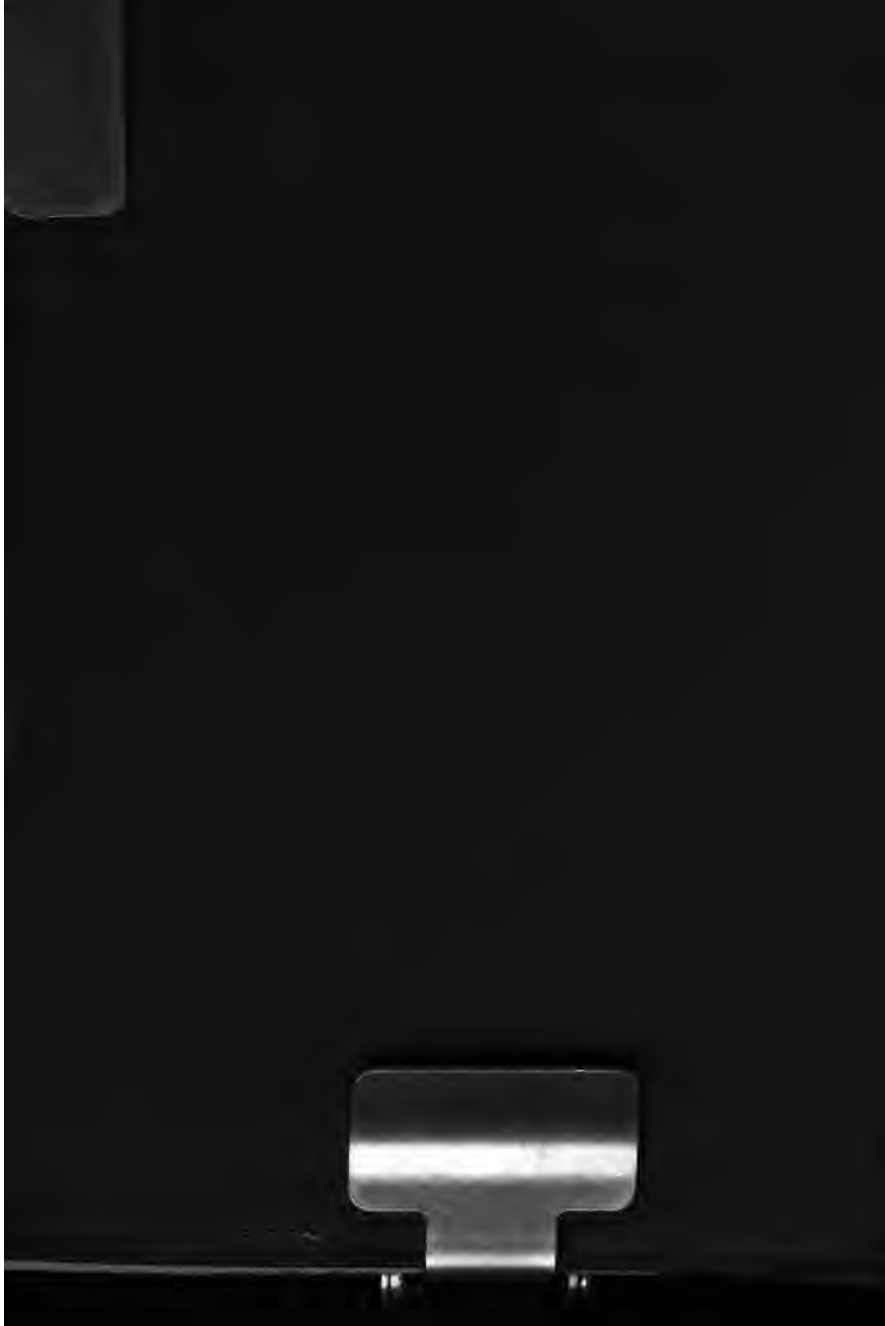
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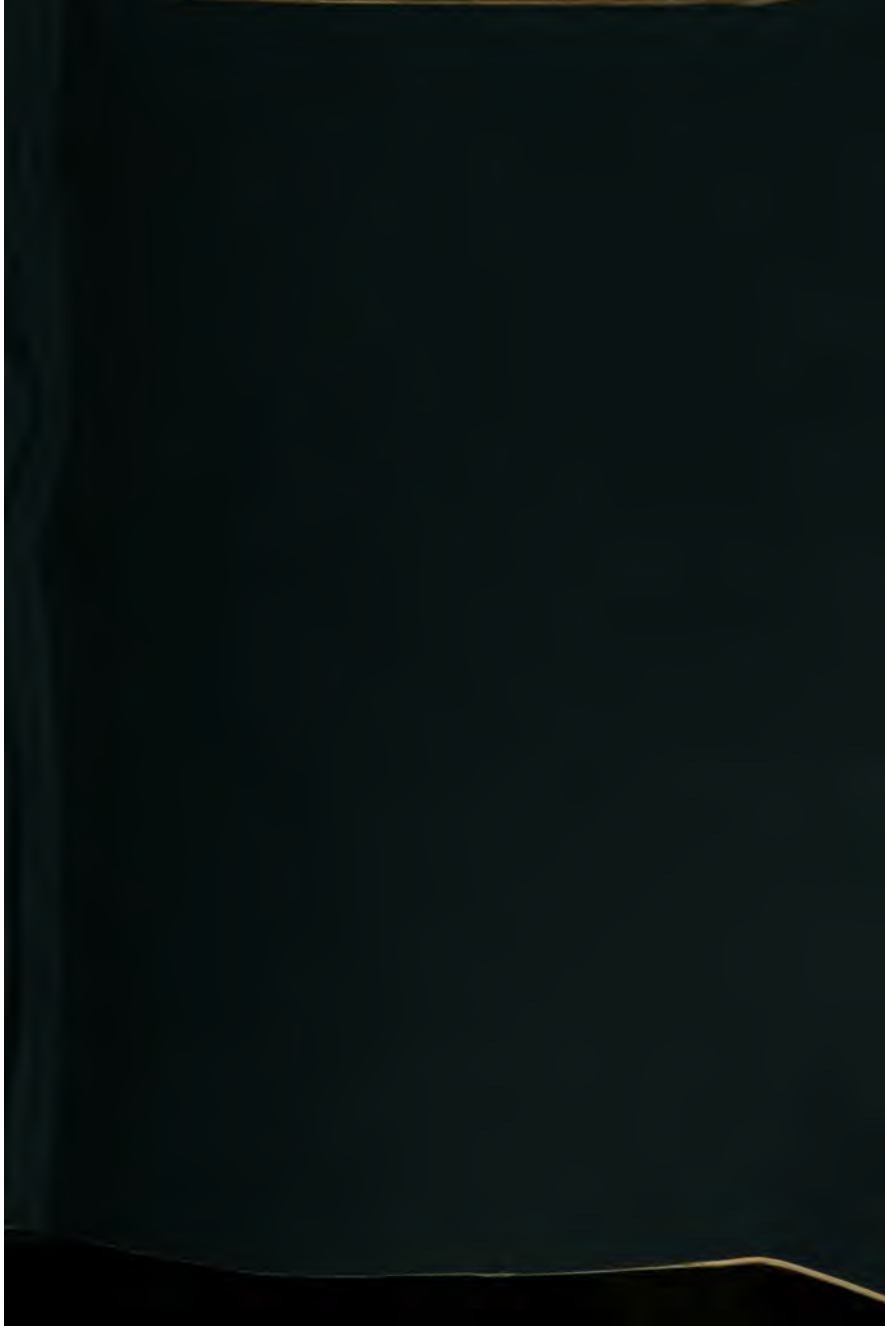
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# A VISION OF LIFE





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A  
VISION OF LIFE

*Semblance and Reality*

BY  
WILLIAM GIFFORD PALGRAVE

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD  
AND HER MAJESTY'S MINISTER RESIDENT IN URUGUAY

—Canterò di quel secondo regno,  
Ove l' umano spirito si purga,  
E di salire al Ciel diventa degno.

*London*  
MACMILLAN AND CO.  
AND NEW YORK

1891

## **LOAN STACK**

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## PREFACE

“ By the death of Mr. William Gifford Palgrave, the accomplished and adventurous traveller whose journey through Arabia in 1862-63 attracted such universal attention, the Royal Geographical Society loses one of its most distinguished members. The event occurred at Montevideo, where he was serving as British Minister to the Republic of Uruguay. He was the second son of Sir Francis Palgrave, the famous historian and Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records, and was born in Westminster on January 24, 1826. Like his eldest brother Francis, he was educated at the Charterhouse, and left that school with all the honours which a schoolboy can gain on entering on a University career. He obtained a scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford, his eldest brother having already entered at Balliol. At the early age of twenty, after an academical residence of only two years and a half, he took his First Class in Classics, in which class are to be found in the same year other distinguished names, such as W. Bright, J. Conington, and W. Ince, while T. G. Baring, the present Lord Northbrook, was in the Second Class. Palgrave also

gained in the same Honour Schools a Second Class in Mathematics. On leaving the University without seeking any further 'distinction, he entered the Army and served as a lieutenant in a regiment of Bombay Native Infantry. From childhood he had shown himself fearless and energetic in the first degree, far-thoughted and full of resource, and now, bringing into the Indian Service the fruits of an education more varied and complete (in the field of military mathematics especially) than, at that time at least, fell commonly to the lot of officers, and having inherited his father's instinct for language, a brilliant career was expected for him by his superiors. But an early passion for mission work among the Arab races, aroused by the translation of the old Arabian romance, *Antar*, now returned upon him with overmastering force. Within a few years he quitted the Army, and was received into a house of the Jesuit Fathers in the Madras Presidency ; this being the nearest accessible to him.

Whilst faithful throughout to family affections, and loyal to old friendships and memories with the strength of a strong nature, to the work of that Order he devotedly gave himself for about fifteen years ; first in Southern India, then (for completion of the requisite studies) in Rome, until the dream of his boyhood was finally accomplished by his mission to Syria and Palestine. He now made himself master of Arabic habits of life, of the religion, literature, and language ; not only preaching extempore to vast crowds (and the Arabian crowd is said to be critical in the niceties of their beautiful and copious tongue), but writing hymns which were sung through the country. Meanwhile the Druse persecution

broke out, and had not the rules of his Order stringently forbidden it, he must, as he stated, have yielded to the urgent prayer of the Maronite Christians, and put himself at the head of their inexperienced forces ;—just escaping with life from Damascus, after giving advice as to the defence of the city which the Maronite leaders feared to follow. As the Mission of Beyrout was broken up for the time, Palgrave determined to penetrate Arabia through its centre, with the object of ascertaining whether it would be ultimately possible to enter that sealed land as a Christian teacher. To aid him in this journey, with due allowance on the part of his religious superiors, he accepted a commission from the late Emperor Napoleon to report to him on various matters connected with Arabia, in which the Emperor was much interested. He had fulfilled his mission in 1863, when, finding it hopeless to go on further with his object, he returned to Europe, quitting the Jesuits soon after. At one of our meetings, in February 1864, he delighted the Society with the account of his journey and adventures, and in 1865 he published his *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, one of the most interesting and romantic books of travel and adventure that have ever delighted the public.

Except for Dr. Wallin's journey across the country in 1848, and the less important one of Capt. Sadleir, nothing had been heard of the interior of the Arabian Peninsula in recent times, and there was a vague idea that the country was dominated by the fierce and intolerant Wahabis, and quite inaccessible to Europeans. Palgrave was thoroughly competent to pass as a Mahomedan ; but no disguise of this nature was needed,

and it was, in fact, in the character of a native Syrian doctor, about whose form of religion no one concerned himself, that he entered Arabia ; the stress of danger in those parts, as he well knew, lying not in his faith, but in his European nationality. As has already been said, his familiarity with the language and habits was perfect, but nevertheless he carried his life in his hand, and he nearly lost it. He had penetrated as far as Haïll when his fame as a learned stranger brought him a summons to Court. In the course of an interview with one of the Princes, he was recognised by two persons who had seen him in Damascus, and the success of his undertaking, if not his life, was in imminent peril. Palgrave managed to evade the suspicion for the time ; but when he boldly went on into the interior of the peninsula, he had a still narrower escape at Riadh—the headquarters of the strictest and gloomiest Wahabi fanaticism—where the Prince Abd-allah discovered his real character and threatened him with assassination. He escaped this peril only by flight from the city, and passed without harm right through Arabia to the kingdom of Muscat, at the south-eastern corner of the country.

In 1865, Mr. Palgrave was employed on special work by the English Government, whose diplomatic service he now entered for the first time, in negotiating for the release of Consul Cameron and other prisoners in Abyssinia. From that time his history is contained in the records of the diplomatic and foreign service of this country. He was successively appointed Consul at Soukhoum Kalé, 1866, Consul at Trebizond, 1867, at St. Thomas, 1873, at Manila, 1876, and Consul-General in Bulgaria in 1878. In March 1872, he

favoured the Society by reading, at an evening meeting, a paper on the country between Trebizond and the Upper Euphrates, over which he had travelled during the period of his consulate at the former place, and in which he gave a vivid account of the Lazes, who were newly settled in the region. He was transferred to Bangkok in 1879, and in 1884 he was promoted to be Minister Resident and Consul-General to the Republic of Uruguay, in the capital of which State he has just died at his post. In 1868 he married Katharine (daughter of Mr. G. E. Simpson of Norwich), by whom he left three sons. A life so adventurous had severely tried his naturally strong vital powers, and the winters of Uruguay, cold to one who had passed many years in the tropics, may have favoured the development of bronchitis, to which he suddenly succumbed. His body now lies in S. Thomas' Cemetery, Fulham :—*Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat ei.*

Besides the work which made him famous, he was also the author of *Essays on Eastern Questions*, 1872; *Hermann Agha, an Eastern Narrative*, 1872; *Dutch Guiana*, 1876; and *Ulysses*, a series of scenes in many lands, in 1887.

*Ulysses*, though the author had not this meaning in view, was indeed no ill-chosen name for one not only so wide a traveller, so quick an observer and vivid a painter of the *mores hominum multorum*, but whose versatility and mental acuteness led him also to be a keen and devoted student of the best literature of many nations. Beside his familiarity with the extensive poetical treasures of Arabia, he knew the *Commedia* of Dante almost by heart; and English poetry of the



highest order was constantly in his hands and on his lips. The lucid brilliancy of style remarked in his Arabian narrative, in fact, was due to these studies; he regained the purity of his native language, after many years spent almost wholly amongst foreigners, by a careful six months' preparatory work among the masterpieces of English literature. To his command over Asiatic languages he must also have been much indebted for the strong hold of loyalty and affection which he had throughout over the various native races amongst whom he was called to work, in a career which, we think, may correctly be described as adventurous, honourable, and useful, in no narrow measure. In whatever sphere of labour he found himself, intrepid devotedness to the duty before him was the abiding note of his character.

Mr. Palgrave became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1878, and on his return to Europe after his journey through Arabia, he received the gold medal of the French Geographical Society."

With exception of a few added words, the above notice has been reprinted (under permission) from the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* for November, 1888. Some further details must, however, be given in explanation of the circumstances in which the following poem was written, and the manner in which it is now presented.

Although autobiographical facts are almost wholly absent, yet the *Pageant of Life* (the author's long-since chosen title, given up owing to the accident of its use elsewhere prior to the publication of this volume,) is so

deeply coloured throughout by his thoughts and experiences of man and of nature under many skies, that a few words upon his own inner life seem required for a fair understanding and estimate of the poem.

With a lively aptitude for study, for language, and for writing prose and verse, which showed itself in boyhood, the writer's mind was from the first of a markedly receptive order; in a high degree candid and open to new impressions, which the imaginative and impulsive bias of his mind, united to bold energy of character, was always ready to translate into action. Hence the fluctuations of opinion,—the successive waves of conviction,—upon the main problems of human life which his course exhibited: Surrendering an English professional career for the Indian Army; joining next the Roman Communion; then devoting all his energies to the Society of Jesus, and quitting it when disappointed of a Missioner's work in Arabia, as noticed in the narrative prefixed. This relinquishment of the aims of life, pursued hitherto with conviction and the zeal of youth, when just at the *mezzo cammin*, soon led him further. He drifted gradually from the Church of his adoption; and, like other Englishmen who have lived much in the East and penetrated into its mysterious secrets of thought and existence,—things often unknown and inexplicable to Western civilization,—he was in turn penetrated himself by the surrounding atmosphere and strange fascination of India, Siam, and China; Japan, above all, mastering him awhile by the spell which, in different ways, she has laid upon many of our countrymen. In the primitive nature-worship of that Empire, the *Shinto* system as it has been named, an old religion

was found which seems to have appeared to him closely analogous to what he conceived had once been realized also in that first "Golden Age" which the poets assigned to ancient Greece. This was in great measure a youthful fancy; but boyhood, through all the vicissitudes of W. G. Palgrave's career, exercised always a singular hold over him. "Shintoism," anyhow, appealed with overmastering sympathy to his imagination, and it was whilst under this spell that he planned his *Pageant* and wrote (so far as in the absence of manuscript dates can now be judged) half or more than half of the contents.

Such a view of primitive existence, of a true but vanished Golden Age, carried with it, or was itself recommended to his mind by a deep, lifelong scepticism in regard to that counter-theory of progressive human advance and amelioration with which (unproved though he held it, and unproveable) in that portion of the world which practically is the whole world to us, we are familiar. Intimate conversance with the East,—not, indeed, unchangeable, but to the European mind almost incredibly slow to change;—the influence of some powerful writers of our own age, adverse to or hopeless of modern civilization;—perhaps unconsciously that doctrine of ascetic renunciation against which the First and Second Books of his poem vehemently protest,—all deepened the sense that human life and the race in its long history displays indeed progress, but progress towards degeneracy and dissolution:—the "road downwards" of the deep-thoughted Greek philosopher.

Assailed thus, as his life, often inevitably solitary, moved on, by even more than the natural gloom and

misery of scepticism in its ordinary type, in his final change the writer's soul gradually reverted to the religious belief of his earlier manhood. Within two or three years before death, Faith, with peace and hope, reasserted her supremacy within the troubled and world-weary breast. He was now duly and formally reconciled to Rome ; ending his career, with an inward happiness and conviction long lost, in that Communion to the service of which his best days had been devoted.

Hence the poem following, apparently from the closing cantos of Book II, or those that open Book III, takes a new—a Christian—at last a Catholic colour. It must, however, remain uncertain how far, had the author lived to revise and correct his work throughout, he might have eliminated from the earlier portion the tone it now bears, which (in accordance with the leading theory of man's history from the childhood of the race) inevitably presents Christianity itself as suffering deterioration, not only through admitted human frailty, but through its appearance when the world was already fast degenerating. But it seems probable that the First Book, at least (here integrally reproduced), was intended for publication substantially as it stands, and that a general submission of the whole poem,—whether written before or after reconversion,—to the judgment of the Church, *more Romano*, would have been added at the close.

That some few passages, however, in the cantos dealing with Religion, could not have been finally included is certain ; and these have therefore been here withdrawn. The other far larger omissions,—to pass from the writer's life to his work,—are due to the fact which will presently be noticed, that as the Vision advances it was

progressively less revised, and hence contains matter,—in total length equivalent to about fourteen cantos,—either distinctly inferior in style or in interest to the bulk of the poem,—or, when we reach the later songs, undecipherable. That the writer was diligent with the “labour of the file,” largely changing and improving his work, is shown, not only by comparison of the successive transcripts, but by the repetition of words and figures which the less thoroughly finished portion exhibits; and the belief seems to be hence justified that the omissions now made would have been consonant to his wish. Yet, except in the single case already noted, nothing has been excluded on the ground of the opinions or views of life expressed:—though whether these outspoken utterances, as upon Physical Science, Trade, and Manufactures, would have been always printed as they now stand, must also remain undecided. The shadow of death,—sudden, solitary, and unexpected, without one conscious instant allowed for the *novissima verba*,—renders all such speculation futile.

Similar considerations apply to several real or apparent inconsistencies which may be observed, even where the poem has received more or less revisal. The universal sway of the twin Powers, Life and Death, seems to be in one part forgotten or arbitrarily limited; the geography of the Vision is occasionally obscure; the Seven Kingdoms themselves are not very clearly discriminated, their boundaries in some degree remain indistinct; the same characters once or twice recur in different regions. The poem, on these points, diverges widely from the clear lines followed everywhere by the *Divina Commedia*; although upon that great work, the Second and Third

divisions especially, it is so largely modelled that this story of "the Intermediate Realm" might also almost have been entitled a Purgatory of Man:—on which ground the motto prefixed has been selected for it. And those familiar with the *Commedia* will recognize easily here and there passages or forms of phrase transfused from it.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances in which this *Vision of Life*,—as, with some loss of clear definition, it has been perforce renamed,—appears, a few more words upon the plan of editing adopted must be given. Except in a very few cases of obvious *lapsus calami* (generally placed within square brackets), the autograph text, when ascertainable, has been rigidly followed, and merely conjectural emendation excluded. Dubious readings are marked \* \* ; longer passages, uncertain or obviously uncorrected, † †. For the First Book, the author's fourth draft has been available; for Book II, cantos 1 to 20, a third draft; from canto 21 to the 18th of Book III, the second; thence to the end only the first rough MS. exists. Except, however, twelve lines near the beginning of Book III, canto 11, the whole poem was approximately completed.

Brief as the notes are, readers, it is thought, will find them useful in identifying persons or places named. Some allusions, however, remain untraced.

In conclusion: How to deal with a work, left as this, has been perplexing. To exclude, or to present only in short independent extracts, whatever had not been fully, or almost fully, revised, would have offered a poem too fragmentary to be generally readable, or satisfactory to such "fit audience" as the author must have intended

to address. To print the whole, for reasons already assigned (without dwelling on its length, and metre unusual to the English ear), would have been unjust to the writer. By the plan here adopted (for which Professor Craik's abridgment of Spenser's great romance has supplied the model), it is hoped that an acceptable middle course has been found, and that the less perfect finish of the latter half will be pardoned in favour of that continuity of the whole which the arrangement here offered aims throughout at preserving.

*August, 1891.*

# BOOK I

(The summaries of Book I. are taken or adapted from the Author's marginal notes. Those to Books II. and III. have been framed from the text.)





## CANTO I

I wander back to the Valley of Vision, which I had entered as a child, and find it desolate—I see my own spectre surrounded by evil memories, but no release—A deliverer appears—His double likeness—I entreat his help—He offers to lead me to the Kingdom of Life—I assent, and ask the meaning of the Vision—He declares himself the ruling Spirit of Canopus, my spiritual ruler and brother:

By devious ways, that recks not here to tell,  
Far had I wandered, till the circling maze  
Of that long error brought me to the dell  
Whence was my starting in the spring-tide days  
When life was mine, an unspent heritage;  
Rich in large promise of well-meeded praise,  
And the great vision of the untried age.

O happy dell, within whose grass-rimmed bound  
Was a whole world to me, my fledgling cage  
Wider than freedom, where th' encircling mound  
Close vaulted o'er with heaven's own flawless blue  
Shut out each meaner sight, each dissonant sound.

"Here then," said I, "th' horizon of my view,  
End of my travel toil, bourne of my quest;  
No more I crave, no further path pursue."

Ah vain ! as finds at eve the bird her nest,

Love's casket left and home, by some rude hand  
Rifled and spoiled, so I my fancied rest.

Nor grass was there nor flower, but drifted sand,

Life's mere despair ; sand-heaped the toilsome track  
Led to blank lonesness ; not th' accursed land  
Of swart Zeboim, nor the ridges black

Of fire-scathed Skaptar showed more desolate  
Than my loved haunt, now ruined. To turn me back  
I strove, but could not ; forced to pause and wait

What next might there befall me : a dense haze  
Gathered around, then cleared ; and lo ! the gate  
As of a broken fane, reared in the days

Of Ammon or Sesostri, void and lone  
'Mid the drift-whitening sands, athwart the blaze  
Of a down-slanted sun ; the blackened stone

Glared to the Western heat, for sunk the day  
From noon, nor yet to evening coolness grown.  
There in the mid blaze of the scorching ray

Careless, as it and balmiest shade were one,  
Dust-soiled his vesture, scant his hair and grey,  
Motionless sat, as by long toil o'erdone,

What seemed a man, yet seemed not ; fixed his look  
As a blank page, where writing razed or none ;  
Statue-like, stone-like, death-like ; silence took

More silence from that form ; nor voice nor sound  
Waked the lone vale of joy and hope forsook.  
But as o'er some dank patch of swampy ground

Hovers a fluttering crowd of noisome things  
Liveliest where most the life-slaying damps abound ;  
Or as the autumn crows, whose flapping wings

Darken about some tree bark-stripped and dead  
That wide o'er the bare field its branches flings,  
Unnumbered shapes flew ceaseless round the head

Of that dim form the shattered gate before,  
Now clustering thick, now in loose circles spread.

Of thin pellucid air the semblance wore

Those shapes, some human, some to bird or beast  
Or reptile fashioned ; taloned some who bore  
Strange circlets like to diadems ; the ill feast<sup>1</sup>

Of Oetus showed such harpies ; so the host  
Of phantoms wildly driven nor paused nor ceased.  
Some threatening scowled, some laughed in mockful  
boast

Some beckoning leered, some pale with rage or pain  
Fled past, like smoke-wreaths by a whirlwind tost ;  
But vain as dreams the threats, th' allurements vain.

And nought I understood, so the strong trance  
Held me, like one bound in a sorcerer's chain.  
And still the sun, as though to Gideon's lance

Obedient, stayed his course, nor sought the West,  
And still in air the phantoms wove their dance.  
As one who knows the night-hag on his breast,

And struggles hard in sleep, and strives to wake,  
So I, by that weird wretchedness oppress,  
Struggled ; but nought availed the spell to break,

Till gleamed a sudden splendour on my right,  
Like the quick glitter of a breeze-swept lake.  
And as at dawn the wide-winged birds of night

Fly to their thicket coverts, fled the brood  
Hateful, o'ermastered by that radiant might.  
There on a rising ground beside me stood

One as in manhood's prime with beauty clad  
And strength serene, from life's own fount renewed ;—  
Ah, how unlike the withered form and sad

By yon lone portal ! yet in secret wise  
A brother's semblance each to the other had :  
Two lamps, twin-fold in fashioned form and size,

But lightless one, one with translucent flame  
A glowing orb, too bright for gazing eyes.

"O thou, whoe'er thou art, whate'er thy name,

<sup>1</sup> Unidentifiable. Oetus was a giant, son of Neptune.

"Or man, or surely god, attend my cry ;  
So be my weakness to thy succour claim.  
Rescue me from this death-stricken vale, where I  
Am prisoner, my own folly's proper meed."  
Weeping I spoke, my hands outstretched on high.  
"Nor god nor man thou seest ; yet thy worst need  
Is by my power outweighed ; mine 'tis to grant  
More than thou ask'st or dream'st of ; mine to lead  
To the true land, fair life's inviolate haunt,  
If that thou darest ; else vain th' attempted way,"  
Thus he, "nor help avails where courage scant."  
"O heaven-sent guide," I answered, "no delay  
Be mine, I give me to thy absolute guard,  
Nor doubt thy skill, nor fear thy power t' assay.  
But who art thou that hast me in regard  
So watchful ? whence the love that to my side  
Has brought thee, where all else is void or marred ?  
Why moves not heaven's great lamp to eventide ?  
And whose the form, phantom bested, yet lone  
That sits and waits the desolate porch beside ?"  
"Well hast thou asked," he answered, "trust unknown  
Is undeserved ; not such thy trust shall be,  
Nor far apart my kinship from thy own.  
In nature one, though differing in degree  
As high from low may differ : More would'st learn ?  
At the bright portals of eternity  
My dwelling is ; there 'midst the lamps that burn  
Hung round the prow of the translated bark  
Fabled of Colchos, well may'st thou discern  
The ruddy fire<sup>1</sup> whose new-risen splendours mark  
Syria's young year, what time the lessening glow  
Of Autumn twilight fades into the dark,  
Dark not to us but you ; th' alternate show

<sup>1</sup> Canopus ; a star of the first magnitude in the rudder of the southern constellation Argo, named after the ship in which Iason sailed for the Golden Fleece.

"Of night and day reaches us not ; we bear  
Light in ourselves, nor change nor shadow know.  
Chiefest of such, outmeasuring all compare

Am I, from Egypt named by those of old  
Who thought earth's types with typeless heaven to share.  
And mine th' ethereal, thine the human mould.

Yet brothers we, linked in the enduring chain  
Fate-knit, that binds us in its circled fold.

Now mark ; whatever land, air, sea contain

Through this moon-tended moon called Earth, com-  
pelled

By law of birth to want, desire, and pain,  
Has in our realm its counterpart, where eld,

Pain, want, desire abide not ; but the blaze  
Of the great Summer by no Autumn quelled  
This the perfection of th' imperfect days,

Time's measurement as ye hold them ; yet the end  
On other heights abides, and loftier praise.

The hues of childhood's prism, the worshipped friend

Of boyhood, youth's gay dreams, love's extasy,  
All that man's thought can reach or hope pretend,  
Are of our fullness ; thine they were, but I

Their truth, their meaning ; me without, thy might  
Were weakness all, thy straightest path awry.

And farther realms than these, to mortal sight

Denied, are mine to show ; the ultimate scope  
Of separate life, the one, the infinite.

Far o'er the star-strewed vault's unmeasured cope

As that thy earth surpasses, thence above  
Love drew me down ; in me thy strength, thy hope,  
Portion and part in th' all compelling Love."

## CANTO II

The Spirit partly reveals himself—He explains the meaning of the Valley of Illusion, and how I may be delivered—He points to my Spectre, in which I see the defacement of my past life, and fall senseless—He restores me to life through the remorse of self-knowledge, and promises to show the entire truth of human life, in its earthly and in its spiritual phase—I assent ; he commends my resolution, and proceeds to explain the Pageant—An ecstasy.

THE ray that from the morn-lit East outspread  
Fires in the opposing West the pallid snow  
Of some far mountain range to rosy red,  
As the mere shade of foggiest night would show  
Compared with the bright flush that lit with flame,  
At name of Love pronounced, my guardian's brow.  
And the dead air around to that dear name  
Quivering awaked to life and melody,  
And tinted green o'er the parched sand-heaps came.  
Then he spoke on ; " In the lone wastes and dry  
Where thou hast strayed, myriads have strayed  
before ;  
But few beheld as thou with filmless eye.  
Strong youth, sad manhood, tottering age and hoar,  
Like shattered twigs, heaped in the torrent's bed  
Leaf-stripped and mutilate, dry from rind to core ;

"Flocks to the pen at dusk of evening led

Of whence or why unheedful, so the train  
Of men, soon numbered with th' unnumbered dead.  
Yet each fulfils his purposed lot, nor vain

Their joys, their griefs ; more suits me not to tell  
Nor thee to hear, till passed with me the plain,  
Named of Illusion, left the spectral dell

Where sits the Form thou know'st not, nor can'st  
know

But in thyself, so strong the sensuous spell  
Woven by the hours around thee, and the show

Of that which is not, veil of that which is,  
As o'er earth's solid bulk the false bright snow,  
For an hour's mockery spread." My hand in his

Smiling he took, and straight the touch, the smile  
As Spring's first breathings with a new-felt bliss  
Thrilled me almost to faintness ; calm the while

He pointed where in the ghost-haunted field  
Sat the lone Form beside that granite pile.  
And as some tower that by the tangled shield

Of trees half hid, sudden to nearer view  
Stands out distinct in its own lines revealed,  
Even thus, nor dim nor doubtful now, nor new,

But as fresh issuing from the founder's mould  
Fronting me there, my very self I knew.

"By this torn is the veil, the story told,

What thou hast made thee in the ill-spent years ;  
What once thou wast, what now thou art, behold."  
Such were the words, not sounded to my ears,

But to my eyes declared in pictured shame  
Not by repentance razed nor washed by tears.  
Vain pleasures, causeless sorrow, merited blame,

Blind error, impotent striving, dead despair,  
And the worse dread that owns nor form nor name  
In that one view before me mirrored were.

Yet mine not theirs the substance, shadows they ;



Mine the ill truth in truth reflected there.  
As sweeps th' eclipse o'er heaven and blots the day

Both thought and life were by that ugly sight  
Blotted, and senseless on the ground I lay.

O mine too well deserved, if endless, night !

O just requital of the thriftless ill  
Whose life is death, so lived in life's despite !  
But that predestined Love whose brotherly skill

In love and pity wrought my overthrow,  
For healing dealt the blow that seemed to kill.  
And now my eyes reopened ; faint and slow

Life to her seat returned, and the stunned brain  
Once more made answer to the pulses' flow.

Not gentler on the battle's trampled plain

A father's hands his wounded son may tend  
Lest some chance touch awake the sense of pain,  
Than my guide bent t' upraise me. " Reached the end

Hast thou of error," such his words, " for truth  
Till self be known, with error still must blend.  
Sharp talons has remorse, and keen her tooth.

Yet none but she has power to rend away  
The Nessus-garment<sup>1</sup> round the limbs of youth  
Wrapped by self-love. Dark night preludes the day,

And birth has pain ; and the long-blinded eye  
Through sharpest smart opes to the visible ray.  
Now past the birth-pangs, day-illumed the sky ;

Now thy healed sight may the hid things behold  
O'er-flourished else by earth's vain imagery.  
The path thy childhood's footsteps traced of old

In ignorant blindness, through my guidance now  
Shall its veiled secrets to thy eyes unfold.  
And other paths by others trod, and how

The mazy errors of the profitless years  
To unwise feet nor rest nor goal allow,

<sup>1</sup> That which, poisoned by the blood of the Centaur Nessus, burned Herakles.

"These shalt thou see ; the hopes, the dreams, the fears,

The hollow phantasms of the long unrest  
That men call Life ; but Death the name it bears  
To us, th' unborn, th' undying ; at my hest

All these shall to thy ken naked and bare  
Stand forth, in their true form and guise exprest.  
Till thou with me shalt climb the difficult stair

That leads to the glad height, the purposed home,  
Where what time marred th' eternal years repair  
And perfect. Rouse thee, brother ; not the dome

Of far-off heaven could from thy need divide  
My love ; let thine from me no longer roam."

"O long desired, late found, my spirit's guide

In more than union, of my heart the heart,"  
Speechless myself, my tears for speech replied ;

"How could I for one hour from thee depart ?

Can self from self be sundered ? Lo, to thee  
I give me wholly up ; nor joy nor smart  
Save as thou will'st I know ; thine, thine to be

Is my sole choice : I follow, should'st thou lead  
Even not to life's but death's eternity."

"Well hast thou said," he answered ; "be thy deed

Seal to thy word ; to firm resolve and high  
Justice and love apportion equal meed.

The pearl of price no earthly price may buy,

The gain to which all other gain is loss,  
Behold them ; these are thine, and these am I.  
O for this treasure well-rejected dross !

O for these joys well-borne extremest toil !

O for such kingdom well-adventured cross !

Few they who free them from the tangling coil

Of the false snake that binds the world around  
And of thy kindred makes his choicest spoil."

A while as one whom difficult thoughts astound

He paused, then thus continued ; "The worse fate  
Is for long years in lower circles bound,

“Till worthy made by proof t’ approach the gate  
Where quicker sped soon shall thy footsteps stand ;  
Not thy deserving, but the appointed date  
To thee, to each, by the determining hand  
Marked on the zodiac dial, that onward moves,  
Nor prayer nor question heeds, nor owns command  
Save what its power allows, or will approves,  
And self-sustained through manifold form and change  
Changeless for ever lives, for ever loves.  
In this thy birthright, this th’ apportioned range,  
This the great spell that linked with mine thy sphere,  
In bonds no blame may loose, no ills estrange.”  
He ceased ; I answered not, by sudden fear  
Made dumb, so bright the splendour which o’erspread  
Sudden the vale, till vanished all that ere  
Had captive held my sight, the semblance dread  
Of my own folly and shame, the ruined fane,  
The dell, the motionless sun : and in their stead  
Dome-like heaven’s infinite blue o’erarched the plain  
Unflecked from marge to zenith ; and above,  
As in earth’s skies Hyperion’s noontide reign,  
Midmost and loftiest throned the eternal Love.

### CANTO III

Invocation of Dante—The beginnings of Life, with only individual differentiation, under the form of atoms tending to a farther goal—My guide explains their nature and progress, and how they arrive at actual personality by entering on the Life of Sense—The Gate of the Life of Sense and Personality, through which the Spirit Life must pass—I wonder at their willingness: till I see the potential life in every atom, tending towards fulfilment—The beginnings of Life.

O POET, and more than poet, with glory crowned  
Not by thy Florence only, thou whose head  
The triplicate laurels of three worlds surround,  
Thou through all mortal, all immortal led  
By her whom the third circle claims, till past  
Each height, thou saw'st heaven's self beneath thee  
spread  
In love made one with the Highest, hear the last  
The meanest of thy kindred; be thy fire  
Within me, be thy mantle o'er me cast  
Thou know'st how rough the upward road, and higher  
Than unassisted my weak steps can climb  
Rise the steep summits of my song's desire.  
The path by thee first marked in happier time,  
Untrod since then, be it mine again to trace  
Led by the echo of the Master's rhyme.

Now to my task. Around I looked, the place

Changed from its luminous stillness, as a dream  
Changes, when busier shapes the first efface.

The air was thick as with an eddying stream

In countless circles drawn ; till earth and sky  
Flickered uncertain through the vaporous gleam.  
Nor what that vapour's self could I descry,

So dense, so swift it rolled, till watchful heed  
With knowledge more exact informed my eye.  
Close-herded crows that to warm roof-tops speed

Thwart the pale wintry eve, when other home,  
Forest and field snow-whelmed, deny their need ;  
Motes in a ray cross-slanted through the gloom

Of some oak-panelled chamber, where a rift  
Lets in strange light on the ghost-tenanted room,  
Are not so frequent as that limitless drift

From far-off distance swept across the plain  
Of specks unnumbered ; some with motion swift  
Whirled upwards, downwards ; some like Autumn rain

From the sky's depths came thronging ; some delayed  
Self-clogged in intricate mazes, till the chain  
Of their mad dance in the air uncertain swayed ;

Each of the other heedless, uncontrolled  
As summer flies in the dank forest shade.  
Yet as white mountain vapours fold on fold

Cling to the rocks, then up the pass are driven  
From cliff to cliff by steady winds uprolled,  
So to the stream of those bright motes uneven

Or swiftly onward whirled, or lingering slow,  
One common impulse to their course was given.  
Long time I gazed, by the multitudinous show

Dazzled, bewildered, nor could aught discern  
Nor whence derived nor whither bound its flow.  
Then to my guide I turned, from him to learn

What my eye taught not ; but more swift his thought  
To the yet unworded question made return,

“ Beyond all time, all space, thy gaze is brought

Near to the fountain source, whence ever stream

The countless lives to separate being wrought

By the high Love that is and reigns supreme,

And from the stores of unexhausted will

Fashions the shapes of th’ universal dream,

Itself their waking. Blindly they fulfil

Their purposed end, as mirrors dulled or bright,

Smooth or distorted, each one surface still

Reflects some ray of the unconditioned light,

Some line of that all-perfect loveliness,

Some partial trace of self-subsistent might.

All in their source are equal ; none may guess

How mote differs from mote, or spark from spark,

Nor this forecast to greater, that to less,

Till each has passed the portal wide and dark

That entrance gives on the uncertain state

Of sense and time and space ; ere then no mark

Is theirs by which to tell their destined fate

Of man, or insect, plant, or beast ; the power

Theirs, but deep-hidden in each, till through the gate

To several life they pass ; then bursts the flower

From th’ undistinguished bud ; then first displays

Its proper hues flaunted in life’s brief hour ;

A life of joys and sorrows, blame and praise,

Threads of the daedal web earth’s surface o’er

Wove in the alternate loom of nights and days.

Behold—” He ceased, nor added word, but more

His pointing hand supplied ; I looked, and knew

Clear figured all that doubtful seemed before.

So, their long voyage o’er, the sailor crew

Entering the harbour ’twixt out-opening rocks

Watch one by one their house-roofs start to view.

And first as, where Syene’s barrier locks

The upward way to Nubia’s palm groves, stands

Some temple’s huge eternity, and mocks

With stillness of black shade the shifting sands

White and loose-piled, so in the mountain's side  
Stood a huge portal, by no human hands  
Square-hewn ; though entrance here no bar denied ;

But all within was darkness, such as fell  
On the lost cities of Campania's pride ;<sup>1</sup>  
Darker than darkness' self ; dense, palpable ;

No gate with brass and iron thrice banded o'er  
Might with such utter blank the sight repel.  
And a thin Shadow restless evermore

Hovered about the lintel, as with wings  
Outspread, the guardian of that open door.  
As one to whom the sight amazement brings

Not understanding silent gazed I long,  
Dull to the meaning of the visioned things,  
And why now high now low the atom throng

Of that great mist its course convergent held  
Drawn in to vanish those black gulfs among.  
And much I pondered by what force compelled

The pure unchartered life should eager haste  
To goal of care, disquiet, change, and eld ;  
And whether sweetness-cloyed it longed to taste

Wilful the bitter draught of personal life,  
Or if all will by mightier Will effaced.

While thus I mused with my own thoughts at strife,

From heaven's blue vaults to earth the troubled air  
With myriad shapes where had been motes was rife.

All that earth's cycled years incessant bear,

All that has part in sorrow, care, and joy,

All that inherits water, earth, or air,

The babe, the child, the virgin maid, the boy,

The man, the wife, by years withered and blurred,

The corpse corruption claims or flames destroy,

The innumerable tribes of fish, or beast, or bird,

The insect lives recorded in a day,

<sup>1</sup> Herculaneum and Pompeii.

From grade to grade by change and time transferred,  
Mustered before me, thronged in such array

As when by midnight's tempest-flash revealed  
All hidden things stand forth in clear display,  
Mountain and forest, river, town and field

Outlined in perfect form ; then swift from sight  
Withdraw them ; so what erst the veil concealed  
Now veil-less, shadow-less in intensest light

Flashed into being ; I looked, and wide o'erhead  
As mounts the star-pranked heaven height over height,  
So was my gaze from range to range upled

Of those bright forms down speeding : not the snows  
On Danube's plains by Russian winds outspread  
More dense, more ceaseless, when the sentinel rows

Of pine in one dense mass the Balkan hide,  
And the dazed guide his baffled toil forgoes.  
Even so bewildered by th' interminous tide

Of life, my straining sight to blindness turned,  
Nor first nor last nor how nor where descried.  
Yet through the wildering eddy dim discerned

Shone the fixed radiance whence all splendours move,  
Alone ; while at my side unfailing burned

Starlike the brotherly pledge of guiding Love.



## CANTO IV

I am summoned to pass the Gate of individual existence—The Guardians of the Gate—The Statues of Life and Death—I ask their meaning—My guide begins to explain, but is interrupted by a Power that compels us to enter the Cavern of Trance—I lose consciousness—Regaining it, I find myself alone in the Land of true Vision, and distinct Existence, and enter on the spiritual counterpart of the surroundings of my childhood at Hampstead—To this I am welcomed.

“THE two-fold guard of th’ all-receiving gate  
Through which each separate life must pass to be,  
Servants and lords of time-apportioned fate,  
The twain in whose most seeming enmity  
Yet real accord all that has form is bound,  
Nor from our duplicate law may flinch or flee,  
Till falls the chain to the last link unwound,  
Are we, the One in Twain, the Twain in One,  
Faithful and true by the True and Faithful found.  
Enter the fane, denied the gate to none ;  
Enter, all leaving, all secure t’ attain ;  
Enter, to know the personal life begun ;  
Enter, to changeless joy through changeful pain ;  
Enter, short is the night, the dawning near.  
Enter, with love thy guide, in love to reign.”  
Such words from the dark portal to my ear

Distant yet clear were borne, where idly still  
As one held doubtful 'twixt desire and fear  
Loitering I stood, nor moved in answer. "Ill  
Thou lingerest," said my guide; "no more delay,  
Nor clog good succour with lag-footed will.  
Behold the imaged semblance, the display  
Of the twin Rulers, throned in equal state,  
Who 'yond those portals hold inseparate sway."  
O wondrous skill that could from stone create  
The forms these words expressed! O happy eyes  
To view such marvels preordained by fate!  
Not fairer sculptures to Athenian skies  
Glittered, when Greece the drowsy world and dull  
Waked to delight with beauty's new surprise.  
By the gateside a youth more beautiful  
Than morn's first star I viewed; his clustering hair  
With roses crowned; Salerno's maidens pull  
No ruddier when Love's festals to prepare  
They crown his shrine with flowers; an ivy wreath  
Girded his loins, of other vestment bare.  
And where he trod, the earth in bloom beneath  
Burst forth his feet to kiss; the laughing sky  
Poured down its brightest radiance on his path.  
In his left hand a bird addressed to fly  
Fluttered, grasped in his right a torch he reared,  
That light and flame cast forth unceasingly;  
Mighty as noontide, clear as joyous morn,  
Gentle as mellow evening, fair as day,  
Loveliness heaven's own portals fit t' adorn.  
But on the opposite side that marged the way  
Sculptured a maiden stood, in girdled dress  
Close wrapped from head to foot, that none might say  
What from all eyes was shrouded; not the less  
Beauteous her face, but downcast, as to shun  
Too curious gaze; a secret none might guess.  
And many asked, but answer found they none.

With poppies mixed a wreath of garnered ears  
Circled her head ; a cup whence one by one  
Fell the sad drops that are great Nature's tears,  
Her left upbore ; empty her right ; her feet  
Trod the crushed stubble of the outworn years.  
Yet the true sister she and consort meet

Of that fair boy ; nor was their being twain  
But one, though thus in semblance opposite.  
"O love to which all other love is vain,"

Thus to my guide I spoke ; "instruct me thou  
What shapes are these before me sculptured plain,  
Yet dark in meaning ; whose the rose-girt brow ?

Whose the sad wreath Lethean twined ? if each,  
As rang the voice, a kindred power avow ?"  
Then he, "Of Life and Death, so human speech

Has named them, these the symbol forms, in one  
Known to th' immortals ; wisdom hard to teach,  
Harder to learn of those beneath the sun,

Though clear to those beyond : " then with quick hand  
Upraised to warn, he stayed the words begun.  
For now from the dim distance of the land

Rose a strong blast, that to the portal high  
Drove, as when whirlwinds drive the desert sand.  
With loving care the Master hastily

His robe around me flung ; then nearer drew  
Me to himself, and said, "The hour is nigh ;  
Pass we the door with conscious steps by few

Or none thus passed of old." With that the cave  
Received us, forfeit to the outer view.  
Blackness and silence all ; a double grave

Of sense and mind closed o'er me ; memory's seal  
Effaced, no more to act its conscience gave,  
Done or endured ; nor might those depths reveal

Aught to th' emergent self ; nor the warm beam  
Of life renewed the broken links anneal.  
So the fallen rain-drop in the eddying stream

Melts undistinguished ; so with dreamless sleep  
Blends and is lost the unremembered dream.

How long, how wide that blank, the cave how deep,

How from its gloom to a new light we passed,  
I know not ; those dread shades their secret keep.

When first my sight regained around I cast,

Midmost in a fair land alone I stood ;

Nor cave was there, nor phantom-haunted blast,

But round me grassy uplands with dark woods

Chequered, and sparkling water-tracks between,  
And far off heights of purple solitude.

Yet haunts of men were nigh, though thick the screen

Of hedge-row trees opposed, that through the glade

Where the birds sang nor roof nor spire was seen,

Highgate or Hampstead ; bright the sunbeams played

On grass and leaf ; and fleecy clouds of Spring

Tempered the golden ray with flying shade.

So forth I wandered, till a crown-like ring

Of branching elms, that on a grassy mound

Mixed with brown firs uprose, as welcoming

To rest from heatful toil, my footsteps found ;

And deep in matted grass a little rill

From th' outer plain with coolness fenced it round.

This with slight care I passed, and climbed the hill ;

Then on its summit laid me down, half hid

Between the close-set trees, and gazed my fill

Far as the pale horizon's circling lid

O'er groves and meadows, where no rival height

With interposing screen the view forbid.

As one who through drear hours of stormy night

On travel bound, joys at day's dawn to find

Some place of rest, with food and comfort dight ;

There the long miles and tedious left behind

Recounting, glad the labours of the way,

Pledges of present ease, he calls to mind ;

So stretched beneath those shadowing boughs I lay ;

While perils past and pains to pleasures new  
By thought transformed, remarshalled their array.  
And still warm winds through the great tree-stems blew,

And still in greenest depths the blackbird sung,  
And still looked smiling down the o'er-vaulted blue.  
Then close, from whence I knew not, music rung ;

Clear as pure silver were the notes ; they named  
Names deep in memory writ, denied the tongue.  
And forms familiar erst in love unblamed,

Childhood's or youth's, in their own beauty there  
Stood forth, from the lost past by love reclaimed,  
And glittering with pure splendour ; "Welcome fair !"

They cried, "welcome returning, welcome, led  
In thy first life the second life to share.

Welcome : the living we, miscalled the dead,

The destined sharers of thy joy, with thee  
Dwellers of the great Orb whose influence shed  
Its fullness on thy birth-hour : love's decree

Made us companions of the darkling way  
Thou now retread'st, from dream and semblance free."  
Thus as they sang, clear and more clear heaven's ray

Sparkled on grass and tree from green to gold  
Changed, and the purple hills that farther lay  
Were amethyst all ; in diamond lustre rolled

The streams, and sapphire-blue the vault above ;  
While spread self-oped before me fold by fold

The pageant scroll, figured and writ by Love.

## CANTO V

A dream of my early boyhood is re-enacted, in which I saw my heart as a snared bird, prisoner to Love—My guide reappears, and gives the meaning of the dream—We stand on the edge of Hampstead Heath, looking towards London—Spirit aspect of modern London and its inhabitants—Cross of St. Paul's—Modern Progress and Civilisation, as centralised in London—Materialism of modern life—Its phantoms—Its end in national and individual deterioration—My guide explains the causes of its failure, because contrary to Nature; and congratulates me on having preferred the spiritual Life.

A LITTLE yet in the blest beams of morn  
Let me 'mid birds and flowers my tale delay;  
A little yet defer the destined scorn  
Of wasted days, lone nights, and steps astray,  
Earth's wrong, life's heavy burden; all too soon  
Must we lament; rejoice we while we may.  
No Siren sang, yet Siren-like the tune  
Sounded within my brain; and one bright star  
Led up the dew-pranked morn of pleasant June.  
On the green lawn, from Asian sands how far  
By manhood's slumbers pressed! a child I slept  
In the visioned sleep where dreams as waking are;  
Then seemed I rose, and through the garden stopt  
Where with white-flowering myrtle pleshed, the rose  
A fenceful order 'long the pathway kept.

And as the dream-bound mind its vision knows

Yet how it knows enquires not, ware I was  
Of the strange show which was my childhood's close,  
That to new birth th' imperfect life might pass ;

So near my walk a fluttering sound I heard  
As of wings tangled in th' embranching mass,  
Seeking deliverance : then I turned where stirred

The leaves, and pinioned 'mid their sprays I saw,  
But struggling to get free, a wondrous bird.  
Ruffled his painted plumes ; with beak and claw

He strove, but nought availed from the strong snare  
Of gilded wire his prisoned strength to draw.

Pitying, I sought the noose with helpful care

T' unloose, and set the feathered captive free,  
But could not, so perplexed the meshes were.  
Sudden a voice, " In vain thou striv'st with me,"

Thus close and clear it rang ; " My name is Love ;  
Mine is thy heart ; submit to my decree."

Starting I woke. " No further need to prove

The vision's truth," thus said my guide, who now  
Beside me stood ; " even here heaven's courses move  
Back to their starting-point ; the waters flow

Onward, then ebbing their first line retrace ;  
Nor aught its being's limits may outgrow.

Follow me now, nor fear ; the bonds of space

Are broken all : nor danger nor decay  
In the vision world for thee, for me, have place."

This said, his hand on mine he laid ; the way

Led up a green hill-crest and margined heath ;  
And wide before us spread the Southern day,  
Where a broad river 'midst the plain beneath

In silvery patches shone 'twixt roof and spire  
Of a great City, that girt as with the wreath  
Of a world's empire either bank ; and higher

Spread on the farther slopes : a smoke-dark cloud,  
By day a veil, by night a vault of fire

O'erarched the labyrinth streets, where a vast crowd

Like their own river ceaseless ebb'd and flow'd,  
With eager steps, and faces downward bow'd.  
Dust-soil'd they throng'd along the pavement road,

Nor rais'd their eyes to the far sky that ever  
Stainless above that smoke-soil'd canopy glow'd,  
But they like circling lines that pass and quiver

Traced on a downward stream, in hurrying press  
Eager renew'd their purposeless endeavour.  
And still from out that brick-pil'd wilderness

Flash'd forth new shapes, new wonders, as the old  
Faded ; and greater still was given for less ;  
While midmost high o'erhead in tarnish'd gold,

Unheeded it by all, in proud neglect  
A Cross of times outworn the story told.

" This the great heart of the great Power, bedeck'd  
With earth's chief gems, with earth's own circle  
crown'd,

Thou knowest ;"—thus spoke my guide nor stay'd t'  
expect

My answer ; " here th' illusive goods abound

That men for substance take ; here most the spell  
Of the old sorceress works its wildering round."

Then look'd I on that crowd innumerable

Of eager faces ; careworn each and pale  
Went hastening on his way ; yet none could tell  
Whither his course or why, nor might avail

Or voice or warning hand their race to stay :  
But as light leaves swept by the Autumn gale  
Onward they whirled ; a standard's broad display

Flutter'd before them by thin breezes spread,  
Of flimsiest gauze, with spangles broidered gay.  
And on its flickering folds were letters read

That chang'd from hour to hour in some new word  
Of blown self-praise, so was the vision led.  
And where it pass'd the murky air was stirr'd



With shouts of joy and triumph, mixed with sighs  
As for lost things, in dissonant contrast heard.

For some of progress sung and victories

By science gained ; and some bewailed their day  
Joyless and dark, by others held in prize.

While dense as luminous insects in their play

That swarm by evening rice-paths, glittering things  
Flew round their heads, or perched beside their way,  
Void of all substance,—fond imaginings,

Science, light, freedom, progress, and the boast  
Of that which man to one mean level brings.

So guided, so accompanied was that host

Of young and old, women and men conjoined,  
Where reverence all of sex and age was lost.

With open eyes staring they went, yet blind

To aught but the vain gauds that moved before,  
And sought, yet paused not what they sought to find.

Then as I looked I saw that evermore

Hour after hour the brightness of each face

Faded, as fades a flower when smit the core  
With blight ; and from each limb fell off the grace

Of natural life, and dwarfed the stature grew ;

Till of that pomp self-vaunted in short space

Was nothing left ; and all that jubilant crew,

Like yearling plants levelled by wintry showers,  
Wasted, and in cold mists were hid from view.

“So let them pass,” thus spoke my guide ; “the powers

Of Nature, the hid springs of weal and woe

Stored in her depths, the prodigal births, the flowers

Of balm or bale ; the fruits that life bestow

Or quench, the seasons’ wheel, the welcomed Spring,

The populous Summer, Winter’s burial snow,

All these, obeyed, man to fulfilment bring,

But thwarted, crush, mocking the vain command

That their set purport from its use would wring.

Not absolute lord of nature man was planned,

“But by obedience to th’ unchanging laws  
That bind him in his proper place to stand.  
But these, as the thwart gleam which treacherous draws  
Night’s insect follies to their doom, the glare  
Of vain conceit, oil-fed by self-applause,  
Onward and downward draws ; nor part nor share  
Of earth’s true kingdom, joy, strength, beauty, aught  
That makes life lovely as day’s light the air  
Is theirs ; so let them pass from naught to naught :  
Till rolled through lower circles, they regain  
The conscious being, to better wisdom brought.  
But thou rejoice, whom from the ill-starred train  
Of such I sundered, when thy vagrant heart  
With mine I bound, enfranchised in Love’s chain.  
So let them pass ; hold thou the nobler part  
Chosen in thy boyhood’s hours, when first thy ear  
Approved the voice that made thee what thou art.  
And many a rose-crowned Summer, many a year  
Has o’er that garden passed, and many a bough  
Heavy with Autumn hopes, now bare and sere.  
Mocks the sad gaze of age ; yet happier thou  
Even in illusion’s loss art known, than they  
Who earth’s false harlot for their queen avow.  
From her, from these I kept thee, day by day  
Leading thee on, till manhood’s perilous prime  
Was gone, and bleached youth’s auburn locks to grey.  
Not in the shows of sense, the toys of time  
Is the true life, thy goal ; on other ground  
Sown is the harvest, reaped in other clime.  
But that ill worm whose coil the world around  
With a death-zodiac binds, from noblest things  
Draws the slow venom of destruction’s wound.  
And cities, nations, empires, senates, kings  
As London fails shall fail ; they most who strove  
Loveless to reach, borne on Icarian wings,  
The perfect bourne, denied to all but Love.”

## CANTO VI

Vision of London as Capital of the Empire—My birthplace—  
London in earlier times—Richard II. and the insurgents—The  
King and the People—Processional triumph of Queen Elizabeth—Her Court : warriors, statesmen, navigators ; Shakespeare, Spenser—Difference between that time and the present—My guide shows me other instances of national decline, as Rome, Constantinople, Athens, Florence, Venice, Paris, Thebes, Nineveh—The cause of their decay, through disobedience to the Laws of natural existence and growth.

THE smoke-wove wreaths whose sullen curtains late  
Shrouded that city's large magnificence  
Were gone ; and clear in view rose the proud state  
Of the world's empress ; rampart none nor fence  
Of brick or stone was hers ; so firm she stood  
In her own might, herself her own defence.  
And as the tangled breadth of some great wood  
With leafy domes and spires of shade and light  
Mottles the plain from some sheer eminence viewed,  
Or the pure blackness of a summer night  
Scored and cross-fretted by the chequered rows  
Of fleecy cloudlets with reticular white,  
So the wide plain adown in sure repose  
By the calm-gliding stream, that mighty town  
Outstretched its populous maze, whence ceaseless rose

Life's blended murmurs ; or a thymy down

O'er-buzzed with bustling bees, keen to fulfil

Their common purpose all, and each its own.

O my loved nurse and birthplace ! royal still

Even as thou art this day ; but worthier showed

As thus I saw thee, London, from the hill

Of boyhood's vision, and th' ignoble crowd

Mechanical spawn of Time's enfeebled eld

Had passed, as from blue skies a marsh-born cloud.

Then as past days redawning there dispelled

Th' unlovely growths of later years, I viewed

Close by the city marge a field that held

What seemed two hosts, so front to front they stood

Diverse yet semblant ; horsemen these, each shield

Emblazoned fair ; their armour dashed with blood

Their own or others'. Foremost on the field

As to a banquet dight, forth rode a youth

Unarmed, no vizor's masque his face concealed,

Fearless, in highborn grace and boyish truth :

Nor paled his cheek, though near th' opposing band

Gathered, in coarsest garb and mien uncouth ;

Rough men of day's rough toil ; each horny hand

For weapon grasped its labour's implement,

Pitchfork or pole or mattock from the land.

Hard was their look, as on fierce purpose bent,

Yet sad, as men pressed by some heavy wrong,

That victory's flush with custom'd shame was blent.

"What seek ye?" thus the boy to that wild throng ;

"Our Leader," rung their answer. "Am not I

Leader and King? to whom but me belong

Redress and justice? Take them." The reply,

"God save our King, King Richard," echoed loud ;

"Thy liegemen we ; o'er us thy sovereignty."

—"The life of nations, kingship, deeds of war,

Or judgment, vigorous serfage, and the soul

To its own purpose steadfast, as the star

"True to the centre of th' encircled pole,

These hast thou seen ; yet look again, ere time  
Deface the writing of the storied scroll."

I looked, the scene was changed ; as fields in prime

Of flowery Spring, so showed the streets, and loud  
The merry bells rang out their festal chime.

And in gay dress with shout and song the crowd

Thronged every street, but most the pomp where rode

A maiden Queen, she seemed, of aspect proud

Yet smiling ; proud her cream-white charger trode

Midmost the press ; behind, a marshalled band  
Worthy such sovereign's lead ; so forth they yode,<sup>1</sup>

Warriors and statesmen ; some from farthest land

Iberian trophies bore, the golden boast

Of far Atlantis' late-surrendered strand ;<sup>2</sup>

And Indian gems, and spoils of Libya's coast

Were there displayed ; and each with other vied,  
Jealous who that high Dame might honour most.

And some to memory known I there espied,

Cecil's pale brow, and wisest Walsingham,

And Sidney's star, and Leicester's peacock pride ;

Howard, and venturous Drake, with many a name

Of war, or counsel, or deep policy,

Who the great meed earned of undying fame.

And 'mid the crowd, nor noted yet, was he

Who all mankind outvalued ta'en in one,

Nature's true glass, a world's epitome,—

Shakespeare ; and with him joined the minstrel son<sup>3</sup>

Of my own City-nurse and his, the praise

Of Glorian,<sup>4</sup> praised of all ; so passed they on

Not to return ; and with them passed the days

When England yet was England, and her Queen

English, and both a dazzled world's amaze.

And much I grieved that what so fair had been

<sup>1</sup> Went.

<sup>2</sup> The Americas.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Spenser.

<sup>4</sup> Poetical name for Elizabeth.

Should now so foul appear ; and the tall tree  
For withered bareness change its earlier green.  
Then said my guide and master, " This to see

That thou hast seen, to few is given ; yet know  
Not new nor strange the visioned destiny.  
Others from loftiest heights have fallen as low

Or lower ; so the numbing streams of death  
Through various channels from one fountain flow."  
He spoke, and pointed to the plain beneath,

Now boundless grown, and fronting due the sight  
Where yet we stood 'mid yellow furze and heath.  
There rose, a phantom scene, Rome's imaged might ;

And from the seven-fold nest to farthest bounds  
Of earth, th' all-conquering eagle winged its flight ;  
To clerkly dotage next and ruinous mounds

Shrunk and dishonoured ; such the doom of sway  
That in excess the natural use confounds.  
O piteous sight of unsurmised decay !

O solitude of her that populous sate !  
Nor deemed her flower could fade, decline her day.  
And there Byzantium mourned her purple state,

Jewel-clasp of two Empires, East and West,  
Now in chained foulness worse than desolate.  
There too I saw, by the like doom oppressed,

Lesser but lovelier forms ; Minerva's pride  
With olive crowned and violet ; erst confessed  
Of arts and learning queen ; there by the side

Of a shrunk Arno mourned the city known  
Etruria's Athens ; there sad Adria's bride ;  
And the old Bourbons' mud-bespattered throne

Where boastful Paris flaunts her worst disgrace,  
As erst in despot splendour matched of none.  
All these and more besides were there in place,

With hundred-gated Thebes, and Nimrod's pride,  
And Ninus' sculptured piles which years deface.  
Heart-sore, " And is this all ? " I weeping cried,

"To this must nations come? no better hope?  
But faint decay and ruin multiplied?"

"Not Nature's crime but theirs; the proper scope,"

Answered my guide, "of all things to increase  
Is framed; not death but life heaven's star-bright cope  
Showers down on men and cities, nor can cease

From ever-working growth; but freely still  
Large and more large renews her primal lease.  
But the thwart power perverse that joys in ill

Through praise dishonour brings, through growth decay,  
Rulers and ruled by turns misguiding; till  
They fall, as these have fallen of elder day.

O ye unwise! who from th' unerring line  
By Nature traced, in self-planned courses stray.  
On its own rocks 'neath its own sky the pine

Puts forth its resinous scent; nor seeks to change  
Its natal slopes the grape-maturing vine.  
Plant, bird, beast, insect, each maintains the range

Of its own personal birthplace; food nor soil  
They vary, nor their self from self estrange.  
But ye with arrogant vaunt, and the fond toil

Of shallow lore would fain the laws reverse  
Of birth, and Nature's garden fair despoil  
Of flower, and flower-born fruit, with skill perverse

Life's deep foundations boastful to remove;  
Till sink your sand-built towers, smit by the curse  
Of slighted Nature and avenging Love."

## CANTO VII

The vision of Ruins, and beyond it a shining City, the abode of true patriots—We journey to it—The City is four-square, with a Northern and an Eastern gate—Numa, guardian of the Northern gate—The guardian of the Eastern gate—No entrance to West or South—The guardian of the Northern gate invites me to enter—I enquire of my Guide the meaning of these things—He explains—Spiritual affinity between Rome and London ; also between myself and those of the Eastern gate, which represents Asia, as the Northern gate, Europe—Sterility of the West or America, from the want of true nobility of soul and aim—Sterility of Africa, and the Tropics generally (figured by the South gate), arising from the natural inferiority of the inhabitants—Limits of patriotic greatness—Japan on the East—Gibraltar on the West—The glory of the City.

As who from some high cliff the beach below  
Bestrewed with splintered wrecks beholds at morn,  
Where heaved in glossy calm the waters flow  
That late such mischief wrought, now as in scorn  
Smiling ; while bare and shivering on the sands  
Cowers some scarce-rescued wretch of all forlorn ;  
So from the gorse-grown hill those visioned lands  
Showed to my gaze, where in sad prospect lay,  
Ruins of time, rent altars, scattered brands.  
But these beyond, on the far marge away  
Shone a fair city's whiteness, as the star



When heavy clouds oppress the dying day,  
Gleams in keen silver o'er the murky bar

From South to North outstretched, the girded zone  
Of night, swift hastening day's delight to mar.  
So where all else was gloom that city shone

Upreared in perfect beauty, wall and spire,  
'Yond the sad wrecks of empire overthrown.

"To that fair town, loadstone of thy desire

Our steps are bent," thus spoke the gracious voice  
That was my guidance ; "what thy thoughts desire  
Be mine unasked to grant when just the choice ;

Nor joys a father more at wisdom shown  
By his loved son, than I in thine rejoice.  
Here of high deeds the guerdon, here the throne

Of the true kings of men, the destinies  
Through toil and death to life's full stature grown.  
Therefore unchanged beneath the changeful skies

Their works abide ; nor ruinous decay  
Nor secret guile their fastness may surprise,  
Nor cloud o'ercast the splendours of their day,

Nor autumn sear their summer, nor the shade  
Of late remorse their steadfast hope dismay."

Thus having spoke his hand on mine he laid,

Guide to my way ; till from that well-known height  
Descending, 'mid the plain our path was made.  
'Mid various talk that seems not here to write,

To those high towers we passed, the portioned close  
Of wise assurance and well-ordered might.

On deep foundations reared the walls arose

Polished and rock-like firm, that might defy  
Worst wrongs of gnawing time, or sudden foes.

Four-square in measured strength they faced the sky ;

And on two sides, to North and East, a gate  
Showed guarded entrance to the passers by.

At either portal, throned in grave estate

Sceptred and crowned, unbid by whom the door

Might ope to none, a royal porter sate.

Unlike in aspect diverse robes they wore ;

Grey-browed the first <sup>1</sup> o'er thoughtful eyes ; his dress

Round its white folds a purple margent bore ;

Bent was his form, as one whom years oppress :

And at his side in youthful beauty bare

Stood sweet Egeria's fount-born loveliness.

But by the gate that fronts the Eastern stair

Sat one nor young nor old, in manly show,

With smiling face, and brow unseamed by care.

I saw and wondered much ; then turned to go

Westward ; but door or entrance there was none,

But a blank wall, denied to friend or foe.

Last where the towers in Southern sunlight shone

With like event I strayed ; then took my way

Back to the Northern gate, the circuit done.

"O thou who wandering long by much delay

Hast reached the sacred mount, where the late flower

Of life some ripened fruit may yet display,

Here rest, for here is rest, the while the hour

Of adverse influence blots earth's skies, to know

Of steadfast purpose wed with truth the dower."

Such welcome, made in gentle words and slow

Where at the gate I stood, rejoiced my ear

From him who second reigned by Tiber's flow.

"Lord of my life, whose love has brought me here

Nor vainly brought," I said, "brother and guide,

Present in whom the past, the distant near,

Tell me why foremost from the Northern side

This greeting given ? who guards the Eastern door ?

And why from West and South access denied ?"

Answered my guide, half chiding, "What before

I told thee call to mind, nor longer be

As one who having, keeps unused his store,—

How in the star-traced courses the decree

<sup>1</sup> Numa.

“Is writ that binds the sons of earth in one,  
So in their birthright climes and skies agree.  
Many the heirs of Numa’s Rome ; but none  
Chiefer than thy own birthplace, her the nurse  
Of thy first childhood by her Thames begun.  
Thy heritage this from out the universe ;

Yet not forbid thy range the names untraced  
In Europe’s page, untuned to Europe’s verse ;  
As his who thrones by th’ Eastern portal placed,  
Silent as yet to thee ; but soon his voice  
Shall fresh and firm upbuild what years defaced,  
As erst Amphion’s song ; till wisdom’s choice

’Twixt these and those may doubtful hang, nor know  
If more with these to mourn, with those rejoice.  
Not thus th’ unstable West, in barren flow

As its own vexed Atlantic’s breast, where all  
Purposeless the dark waters pass and go,  
With lawless winds in hourly rise and fall.

These worth nor honour rules, but common greed  
Not as of men, but cattle from the stall ;  
Each for himself ; nor reverend age, nor meed

Of honoured birth, nor courtesy that tends  
On gentle minds, nor care of generous deed  
Is theirs ; but shallow strivings, shallow ends,

Youth joyless, manhood loveless, life a dream  
That fame records not, past, nor praise attends.  
Vanity ! Such the fountain, such the stream ;

From withering what the rootless plant can save ?  
Or what the promise of lost youth redeem ?  
O had he known that vaunted gift who gave,

A second world, what ills his gift should bear  
To him, to all,—unploughed the Western wave  
Had kept the secret of its shores, and ne’er

Not to redress but ruin, to the New  
Had the Old lent an ill-apportioned share.  
O foolish men, the ancient poise and true

“Of ordered measure cast aside, to weigh  
Unequal weights in self-forged scales untrue !  
Nor yet where Southward flames the zodiac day  
Is aught of memory worth the groves among  
Where dusky nations dusky lords obey.  
Small wisdom theirs or strength, nor much of wrong  
They heed, or right maintain ; recorded praise  
Nor blame to such in manhood’s right belong.  
Turn thee from these, nor care what later days  
May haply garner from a thriftless soil,  
Nor seek the fruit where yet the flower delays.  
This know ; from where Cathay to duteous toil  
Sends forth her long-haired children, and the sun  
First resting finds from the wide sea’s turmoil,  
To where on Calpe’s<sup>1</sup> heights, his journey done,  
He stays a late farewell, the bounds assigned  
Are these to manhood’s worth, since man begun.  
Nor think the priceless gems of praise to find  
In South or West new-ventured, or the show  
Of popular rule, and freedom ill-defined.”  
Thus while he spoke a splendour as the glow  
Of the great day-star’s worshipped orb, that fires  
To burnished gold the upland’s crested snow,  
Lit with pure flames the ridgy roofs and spires  
In mazy lines, till all that city shone  
As crystal, netted o’er with gilded wires.  
O of true virtue and great deeds the throne !  
O just reward of those who justly strove !  
Joyous the gates I entered, o’er me thrown  
The imperial mantle of abiding Love.

<sup>1</sup> Gibraltar.

## CANTO VIII

My delight on entering the City ; which contains the noblest of men—I traverse the Northern quarter, where are the great men of Greece, Rome, Italy, Holland, Russia, England, Venice, and the Mediterranean region ; and am admitted to their fellowship—I meet Agis, King of Sparta—We converse—He relates his attempt to regenerate Sparta : its failure, and his death—My guide consoles him : his triumph—I enter the Eastern region, laid out as a garden, and am welcomed by the Guardian thereof.

THE joy, the wonder, all that thrills the breast  
Almost to pain, when erst from far the foot  
Measuring its road, halts on the seven-fold crest  
Of the world's Queen ; awhile in rapture mute  
The traveller stands, then "Rome!" exclaims, and still  
Repeats, as fearful of the truth's dispute ;  
Nor may his eyes of gazing take their fill,  
Where grey with memories rise the walls that tell  
Of giant rule, and earth-encircling will :  
Such may his joy when by th' associate spell  
Of Love upheld, my steps the threshold passed  
An hour to pace that honoured citadel.  
The deeds that time and time's own heavens outlast,  
The thoughts that quenchless burn when quenched  
the stars,

The spoken words, mightier than tempest blast,  
The works of laurelled peace, the well-fought wars,  
The words that man for more than man proclaim,  
The thoughts of light, as morning's radiant bars,  
And they the sons of greatness, lords of fame,  
Those words who boldly spoke, those deeds who wrought,  
Not in their own but in their country's name;  
Who greatly dared to think, and gave their thought  
Substance in art, nor backward turned, but deemed  
The higher life by the lower cheaply bought,  
Were here, on earth by death from death redeemed,  
Robed in that city's shadowless light, the while  
Each starlike in his proper splendour beamed.  
O of our kind the glory! in what style  
Can I the jewels of your high praise enchase,  
To which all bright is dull, all precious vile?  
From street to street I ventured with slow pace  
As one who finds him 'mid a nobler band  
Than wont, and in mere shame casts down his face.  
For all that Greece, or Rome, or the fair land  
Daughter of each, divinest Italy,  
Have given to fame, I here in presence scanned.  
And joined with these the chiefs whose purpose high,  
Of self forgetful, laboured still to rear  
Through toil and pain their birthland's majesty,  
By Tiber's yellow stream, or Arno clear,  
Or the crag-margined shores where burst and flow  
Aegaea's sparkling tides, or marshes drear  
Of Holland, Moscow's fire-illumined snow,  
Green England's daisied meads, the marble walls  
Of Venice, Syria's rock-reflected glow,—  
From death-strewn fields to history known, from halls  
Of council, warriors, statesmen, whose firm mind  
Nor popular greed infects, nor fear appals,  
All doubt, all wavering purpose left behind,—

I passed amid these mighty ones ; to me  
Unworthy was such worthiness assigned.

As one to whom some wizard hand the key

Of a great wealth has given, from room to room  
Strays on 'mid gold and heaped-up jewelry,  
Master of all, and through the caverned gloom

Sees further heaps, and thinks, "The antique earth  
For me on these has closed her hoardful womb ;"  
Then to those riches turns again, in mirth

Laughing aloud, and drunk with childish pleasure,  
Nor fears decay, nor heeds of other worth ;—  
Even so was I, girt by the new-found treasure

Of will and wisdom, from the founts of time  
Poured forth around me there, nor stint nor measure.  
So on we fared, our talk of deeds which climb

Fame's highest heights, of deaths that life complete,  
Not conquer, the ripe first-fruits of earth's prime ;  
Till at a corner of the shining street

That midway cleft the town, I saw where sate,  
Fair as the sky where night and morning meet,  
In most translucent calm, a form sedate

But sad, and sad the glories of his brow,  
Though as a conqueror crowned in kingly state.  
A lustre half-eclipsed, a smothered glow,

A beauty dimmed by pain ; that all my heart  
In pitying love went forth his truth to know.

But ere I spoke, he questioned : "Who thou art

Tell me, and whence thy path, and who thy guide,  
That mortal claim'st among th' immortals part ?"

"Of little note my name, nor aught beside

Worthy recount is mine ; who leads me knows  
Alike my whence and wherefore," I replied :

"Nor needs my guide declare ; th' assured repose

Of this firm city, an untroubled lake,  
Reflects each light in upper heaven that shows.  
But who art thou thus lone ? my eye-balls ache

"With gazing on thy beauty, and my soul  
Faints in compassionate longing for thy sake."

"A purpose unfulfilled was mine, a goal

Unreached," he answered, "Sparta's heir and king,  
The lines of shame t' erase from Sparta's scroll  
I strove, and back the honoured days to bring  
Of old Lycurgus, and the blighted wreath  
Inweave with garlands of a better Spring.

As he who with much toil the stifled breath

Of his drowned child would fain recall, in vain  
I wrought, nor knew that death but leads to death,—  
Once gone, for ever gone." Like one with pain

Oppressed, awhile he ceased; then raised his face  
And smiled. "And were my hour renewed, again  
Would I adventure, though the pathway led

But where it ended then." He bared his neck  
Black with the cruel noose. "Thou seest," he said,  
"Sparta's reward, no more; nor much I reck

My doom; nor, pilot of th' ancestral state,  
Though guiltless of her loss, survive the wreck."

"Agis," then spoke my guide, "unequal fate

Conquered thy hopes, not thee; the nobler lot  
Once chosen, abides thy portion; factious hate  
Has but itself o'ermastered; unforgot

Sparta survives in thee, the holiest word  
On the muster-roll of fame, that numbers not  
Greater than those who death nor shame have feared

Even from their country, for that country's good,  
And to their own her welfare aye preferred.  
Swift fades all human growth unless with blood

Watered betimes its roots; life's loftiest towers  
In death's foundations aye have firmest stood."

As some fair field late drenched in wintry showers

By Spring's returning sun caressed, again  
Glitters in emerald spikes and varnished flowers,  
So at these words the gloom of anxious pain



Passed from that regal brow, in joy serene  
Assured he had not striven nor died in vain.  
Then on we passed, to where a meadow green  
Starred with bright flowers to sight disclosed a throng  
Of other aspect ; some the groves between  
Paced in glad converse linked, and some with song  
Made the air tuneful ; some in restful ease  
Sat or reclined the grass-edged streams along.  
Less fair than those behind us left were these,  
Yet not less noble showed, but calmer shone  
Their light, as moonshine over silent seas.  
Self-perfect shapes, each in himself a throne  
Of firm content and absolute victory,  
A lord of nations each, and each alone.  
A purer air was theirs, a sunnier sky  
Through the far Eastern portals issuing there  
Whence light and life have course continually.  
“Thrice-happy spirits, to whom this garden fair  
Is given, your wages these : O ! would that fate  
Past life, past death, with you might mete my share.”  
Such thought was mine, when from the Eastern gate  
Th’ unspoken answer came, that silent passed  
Through sense and heart, with joy untried elate.  
“Well hast thou chosen ; here be the anchor cast  
Of thy long sail,” so spoke my guide, “thy race  
With these is numbered, these thy peers at last.  
Here rest ; awhile among them be thy place,  
Thy sojourn here, so will the lords above,  
With these thy brethren, circled in th’ embrace  
Foretaste and pledge assigned of deathless Love.”

## CANTO IX

Beauty of the Eastern garden, the resting-place of the Eastern patriots and heroes—I fall into an enchanted sleep, and in dream am transported to Japan: description of Japan—Vision of the Sun-origin of the Japanese nation, and the connection between the two—Temno, the first Emperor—His semblance, as the Guardian of Japan—He announces himself to me; and explains the excellence of the first Age of Japan—Its simplicity and conformity with Nature—Ill effects of the introduction from China of Buddhism, and of luxury and pomp—Civil wars, and succeeding torpor under the usurping nobles—Foreign attack—Restoration of the Empire—Exhortation to Japan to stand fast on her original and native ways—An extasy—End of the First or Introductory Pageant.

SATIATE with pleasure through that garden wide  
I strayed by copse and streamlet, the sweet hour  
Content t' enjoy, careless of all beside.  
Whate'er may loveliest be of plant or flower,  
Whate'er of beauty may the varied scene  
Present in open lawn or arching bower;  
Full brooks of mirrored silver, marged with green,  
Blossoms of every hue the summer West  
At sunset wears the golden isles between,  
In one were gathered there; not farthest quest  
Of Ocean's hid retreats, nor fairy glades

In moonlight masked, that wondrous tales attest,  
Nor the cool valleys by Pierian maids

Trodden, nor Syria's glens, nor Enna's plain,  
Nor Circe's haunts, nor Eden's vanished shades,  
Might in compare that garden's vaunt attain ;

Even Nature's self with Nature to adorn  
Aught else in rival guise, might strive in vain.  
Nor ever night was there, nor eve, but morn

In dewy sparklings radiant, that with Spring  
Contended which should most these bowers adorn.  
And Time was there, but Love had clipped his wing

And reft his scythe, lest to that happy ground  
His captious malice aught of wrong should bring,  
Till the great hour predoomed, the ultimate bound

Of time and time's creation, when complete  
The secular year fulfils its destined round.  
Then as I wandered on with careless feet

From lawn to glade, from glade to lawn, the dell  
With a strange stillness of enchantment sweet  
Closed me around, till on my sense there fell

Deep slumber, where a pine's wide boughs outspread  
Shadowed a bank of moss-wove asphodel.

I slept, and seemed, but how I know not, led

Where on an island coast a dark blue sea  
Broke in white waves unceasing ; overhead  
With flakes of sulphurous smoke heaven's canopy

Was streaked ; but all beyond, green plains and  
hills

Were netted o'er with dense embroidery  
Of every growth that from earth's store distils

Colour, and scent, and sweetness ; shone between  
Wide-spreading lakes, swift torrents, silver rills.  
No fairer land Idalia's goddess queen <sup>1</sup>

Claimed for her own ; yet from the crested snows  
Fire-mingled horror frowned in sternest mien.

<sup>1</sup> Venus.

All these I saw, nor marvelled ; sleep bestows  
Such calm 'mid strangest phantasm, that the mind  
As fore-aware, nor fear nor wonder knows.  
Then, where it seemed I lay, a vehement wind  
Intense with torrent brightness, as a stream  
Of whitest light that makes the eyeballs blind,  
Burst forth and wrapped me round ; till in my dream  
Swept upwards 'mid the central fire I stood  
That in their courses guides the sevenfold team  
Of borrowed light and warmth each day renewed,  
And other orbs unreckoned ; these among  
Our little world its moon-dogged way pursued.  
But from above what seemed a bridge was flung  
O'er the abyss to where, third of the seven,  
A slanted ball our sea-girt planet hung.  
As o'er some cliff by primal earthquakes riven  
The workman's skill a binding length of chain  
May throw, so this o'erarched the void of heaven,  
And to that island 'mid th' involving main  
Where erst I stood, the farther end was bound ;  
Then to the fiery centre turned again.  
Nor form distinct was there, nor act, nor sound,  
But from the inmost depths outstretched the hand  
That makes and mars whatever lives on ground.  
And as the flickering lights that net the sand  
Seen through clear shallow waters, when the day  
Looks down from balanced noon o'er sea and land,  
With intertangling shapes instinct the ray  
Traced varying pictures there, now seen, now gone  
Where mirror-like earth's mottled surface lay,  
Of trees, and beasts, and birds, and men ; each one  
A moment given to view, then hid from sight  
By other shapes successive o'er it drawn.  
Then as a sudden star that 'midst the light  
Of the broad new-risen morn appears, nor less  
Glitters distinct in the dawn-silvered height,

Stood forth a warrior form,<sup>1</sup> in stateliness

A visible god, parent of gods and kings,

With the sun's glories girt as with a dress.

And o'er his crested head with plummy wings

Hovered a dragon-bird ; and keen his look

Was sent before, gazing on far-off things

Where star-like in the tremulous distance shook

The destiny of Japan, the island gem

Jealously set in Ocean's farthest nook ;

Of Asia's sea-dipped robe the flowery hem,

Of noblest tissue wove, yet firm t' outlast

The gold and iron of Rome's own diadem ;

Heir of the primal sun, from dateless past

To dateless future, Empire's singular throne,

In Nature's central strength founded and fast.

Then as I looked, with gentler lustre shone

That hero-shape, beckoning me where I stood

With gracious speech of welcome ; "Not unknown

To thee my name, my lineage, unsubdued

By all-subduing Time and Change, and aye

Like Spring-tide flowers from age to age renewed."

He spoke, and pointed where beneath us lay

In greenest light, chequered with dusky shade

The gathered isles that Temno's throne obey.

Then thus ; "Child of antipodal earth, conveyed

By Love to Love's domain, attend and learn

The truth in fiction's visioned scene conveyed.

So through the time-wove veils mayst thou discern

Whence kindled the pure flame through secular years

Unquenched, through ages yet unquenched to burn.

No demon-haunted fanes, no dotard fears

Were once Japan's ; no altar-stone, no shrine

Was dark with victims' blood, or wet with tears.

No statecraft yet had traced the sundering line

'Twixt man and man, rulers and ruled, nor yet

<sup>1</sup> Temno.

“ Disparted human life from life divine.  
Nor simple truth lay tangled in the net  
Of multiple science ; none the charge belied  
Of herited toil ; nor might the lord forget  
His vassal's sunborn kinship ; side by side  
Palace and cottage rose ; the chieftain's hold  
To the serf's hut protecting strength supplied.  
This was ; till from the West upgathering rolled  
A vapour dense with monstrous images  
Of palace-courts, temples, and gods of gold,  
And priestly hopes and terrors, the disease  
Of mind o'erstrained to madness, such as throng  
The hermit's cave, till mockery-girt he sees  
Angels or demons in illusion strong,  
Like herded clouds by the Autumn tempest chased  
Flight after flight the evening skies along :  
And luxury's pomp and wealth-bred pride effaced  
The simpler life, as smirched a picture rare  
Of ancient skill by some coarse hand defaced ;  
And bigot zeal and tyrannous wrong were there,  
And war begetting war, and rival rage,  
And the foul things that bred and nurtured are  
Of time's corruption ; till th' exhausted age  
Lapped in tricennial slumber pulseless lay,  
And o'er it custom closed her iron cage.  
Till waked by rude assault, we stand at bay  
'Gainst foes without, 'gainst our own selves within,  
And in our late revived our earlier day.  
So with new youth instinct her spotted skin  
The serpent casts, nor heeds the pulsing throes,  
Intent the renovated life to win.  
My own heroic country ! he who knows  
Loves thee ; who loves, with jealous dread surveys  
Alike misleading friends and pirate foes.  
From the false outer-lure avert thy gaze ;  
In thy own self and Nature's mirror look

"For the glad image of imperial days.

Nor foreign law, nor lore, nor art, nor book

Thou need'st ; nor with the foolish be thou found

Who glass for gems, tinsel for gold mistook."

Thus while he spoke the light that clothed him round

From heaven's ancestral orb, sent forth a ray

That dream to sense transformed ; and on the ground

Where late I slept, wakeful again I lay :

With flowers the grass was rife, with birds the grove ;

And at my side the guardian of my way,

Shone, the bright reflex of transforming Love.

## CANTO X

We leave the Glorious City and Garden, and go Eastwards by a narrow path in a dismal wood, whence comes a sound of moaning and lamentation—I ask an explanation, and am answered that this is the region allotted to those who have wasted their life without worthy aims or deeds ; the commonplace ; the selfish : Also of those utterly worthless and depraved by nature, vicious and cruel from their birth ; examples are named to me—All these forfeit their personality, and return to the general mass of existence, as material out of which new individualities may arise—I see them melting and fused into indistinct substance—They have no individual future, nor personal link to a second life—I am downcast at the sight, but my Guide rouses me to go onwards ; we shall soon have passed the region of the Second Death—This is a mystery revealed to few.

FROM the fair haven where the joys of shore  
Are with sea-toil at quits, half-willed the crew  
On further voyage bound, unloose once more  
The bark long beached in calm ; the sails anew  
With song and shout unfolding to the breeze  
Forward they fare, till from their lessening view  
Are gone the quays and houses, heights and trees,  
The dear familiar landmarks, bartered ill  
For breadth of hazy skies and shifting seas.  
Now back they strain their view, now round them, till



Dim grow their eyes with tears, nor aught they find  
Present, the depths of memory's void to fill :  
So from the City of Praise, the close assigned  
To noblest deeds, the crown of all delight  
Round victor brows by Love victorious twined,  
Not now by choice, but by th' o'ermastering might  
Of Fate's decree, that willed my steps to tread  
Each maze of circling life, each difficult height,  
With slow submissive feet and downcast head,  
Silent, nor conscious all, I passed the door  
Whence Eastward through the land the pathway led,  
With quickset thorn and bramble matted o'er ;  
Rugged the ground and dry ; large stones between  
Strewn in loose sand vexed the tired footstep sore.  
Nor lightsome flower was there, nor pleasant green,  
But speckled growths and hemlock's sullen leaf  
'Mid sapless trunks and blighted boughs were seen ;  
Boughs where no sweet bird sang, but sounds of grief  
With moanings mixed and cries of vain lament  
That sought but found not to its woes relief,  
Filled that sad wood, and followed where we went,  
A tedious way, 'mid heavy vapours cast  
O'er path and copse, a dank infolding tent.  
And still the moaning voices wailed around  
As wails 'mid dying woods the wintry blast.  
And lead-like weighed the lifeless air, that sound  
Stirred not, across my brows, and in thick sand  
Clogged, my tired steps no certain footing found.  
So fares 'mid Arctic flocks some shipwrecked band  
Frost-doomed to slumbrous death, where the chill sea  
Frets the black edges of an ice-girt strand.  
"Master," at last I said, "what strange decree  
Of Fate, or vengeful guerdon of past crime,  
Or Chance untoward, if Chance indeed there be,  
Has desolate made of light and life the clime ?

"And whence these wailing sounds of grief unseen  
Like infant ghosts that mourn their ravished prime?"  
"Not Chance," he answered thus, "nor the blind Fate  
Fabled of some, o'er these have sway; no power  
Is theirs aught here to ruin or create.

But as from stalk the bud, from bud the flower

In certain sequence springs, till last the fruit  
Mellows in ripeness to the seasoned hour,  
So all thou here behold'st in earth has root,

Thence to fulfilment brought, nor less nor more  
Than in its cause ordained and certain suit.<sup>1</sup>  
The high rewards of patriot toil, the store

Of joys won by endurance, the fair sheaves  
Of harvest sown on Nature's kindest shore,  
These hast thou seen; nor wonder much if grieves

Thy spirit to change for shade the blessed light,  
And withered boughs for springtide's golden leaves.  
For here the doom of those who shunned the fight

In craven sloth, nor ranged them with the bands  
Of good or ill, rolled round from day to night,  
Purposeless, useless, shrivelled hearts and hands,

To selfish pleasures, selfish cares consigned,  
The cankered weeds of life's unfruitful sands.  
They too whom yet unborn a reprobate mind

Fashioned to ill, in foulness bred, their hours  
Numbered by deeds of shame, a bestial kind.  
Th' unnatured mime,<sup>2</sup> who, crowned with poison flowers,

Trophied his own disgrace, twice matricide,  
By Baiae's shore, and Rome's fire-wasted towers;  
And Emesa's painted god,<sup>3</sup> and who beside

Verona's courts or, Padua,<sup>4</sup> thine with shame  
And blood besmirched, and she the murd'ress bride<sup>5</sup>  
Of Kirkfield's blackened walls, and more whose name  
Is writ in time's worst scroll; and with them blent

<sup>1</sup> Consequence.

<sup>2</sup> Nero.

<sup>3</sup> Elagabalus.

<sup>4</sup> Ezzelino d'Este : Galeazzo Visconti.

<sup>5</sup> Mary of Scotland.

“ Despots and eunuchs, Asia’s secular shame.

All these inglorious here sad discontent

Holds prisoners ; they ’mid thorns and twilight lone  
Lost life, lost love, lost joys, lost all, lament.

Nor sign nor memory theirs ; form, that each one

From each beside divides, a separate whole  
Or man or less than man, from these is gone :—

Unsexed, unshaped, unconsciened, till the scroll

Of heaven-writ time unfolding mark the change  
That shapes to self the yet unpersoned soul.”

No more he said, but pointed to the range

Of that dense girding wood ; I looked and saw,

Or seemed to see, so vague the sight, so strange,

Uncertain things like snow-flakes when the thaw

Of Spring’s first venture has their links unstrung,

That fused in shapeless masses earthward drew.

So downward weighed in ragged wreaths that clung

To the bare boughs, or scattered here and there,

Drifted by unseen gusts at random flung,

Those dregs of ruined manhood ; but the air

With inarticulate hiss of scoff and scorn

And moanings of a woe beyond despair

Was thick ; a starless night divorced from morn,

A Springless winter, where th’ untimely germ

Hard locked in frost and darkness rots unborn ;

A mouldering layer, where crawls and feeds the worm

Of death in death, till from the general heap

New powers assigned may better lives inform.

But not themselves they raise them from the sleep

That being’s lines effaced, nor theirs the due

Of years renewed who nothing sowed nor reap.

To their first life, first hope, first task untrue

No second chance is theirs, no conscious day

Waits them through secular courses dawned anew.

Name, memory, self, their all has passed away,

As clouds a moment touched by sunset’s beam

Fade in the rain-dimmed twilight's common grey.  
So on we went ; and still that evil gleam

Clung to the woods around, and sadly shrilled  
The inarticulate wail ; or truth, or dream,  
Or both, I scarce could tell, such sadness filled

My heart at thought of that sad ruin, the tomb  
Of squandered life, and being unfulfilled.

"Rouse thee," then thus my guide, "nor make to gloom  
Profitless way ; what here thou seest of dread  
Is but the darkness of Life's fashioning womb.  
Leave to their shame the shamed, to death the dead.

Onward ; the road is long, and far the goal,  
And brief the hour, and steep the path we tread."  
As wine to quivering lips when faints the soul

From out th' o'er-laboured limbs, so was thy word  
To me, my guide, my hope, my heart's control.

"Look up," thus he continued ; "great th' award  
Well earned by little pain, sweet the repose ;  
On these thy thoughts be fixed, in these upstored.  
And see ; even now the tangled forest shows

Less dense ; and thinlier wove the thorny screen,<sup>1</sup>  
And fresh the wind from off the outland blows  
Scattering the phantom haze ; a kindlier green

Mottles the dusky ground ; and lightsome day  
Sunders with silvery streaks the cloud-wove screen.<sup>1</sup>  
While the sad wails that long have dogged our way

Now faint and fainter come, till heard no more,  
Like far-off funeral notes when borne away  
Seaward from listeners on a spell-girt shore :

And part thou understand'st, and part the veil  
Of earthly grossness blurs and darkens o'er.

To listening ears, to thine, is told my tale ;

To seeing eyes revealed, not theirs who rove  
Self-blinded, self-betrayed ; nor guides avail

When quenched the lamp, unclasped the hand of Love."

<sup>1</sup> Sic MSS.

## CANTO XI

We are in an empty plain, sloping up towards a mountain range—  
My guide explains that what we have thus far passed was the  
Intermediate State assigned to the noblest, and, next, that to  
the basest lives—But many regions and conditions remain,  
corresponding to other degrees and pursuits of life—He urges  
advance—We begin to climb the mountain, but the path  
breaks off—My guide ascribes this to some malignant power—  
Above the precipice appears a man's hand, and six other  
mystical symbols, the last a fair youth, whom my guide speaks  
of mysteriously as Eros or Anteros—The mystery can only be  
declared, and entrance given by the presiding Power.

Now on we fared by open ground, but strewed  
With tumbled blocks, and specked with tarns that  
shone

Silver, 'mid blackening moss and granite rude ;  
Grey overhead the heavens, and distant grown  
To limitless height removed ; and faint afar  
Like a vast wall uprose a mountain zone.  
Yet to our onward march th' horizon bar

No nearer grew ; nor day was there nor night,  
Nor sky-throned sun, nor roving moon nor star  
Told of time-chronicled change ; behind in sight

Lay a black streak the woodland, and before  
Wide stretched the desolate plain to left and right.  
As sleeps a play-tired child his pastime o'er,

So slept th' encircling air ; no motion stirred  
The balanced reed, and grassy plumelet hoar.  
Nor hum of insect flight, nor chirp of bird

Nor aught that lived was there ; no landmark told  
Of measured space, or path or goal averred.  
By doubt perplexed, yet fearful lest too bold

In question found, I turned my guide to ask  
Whence the numb stillness, what the desolate wold.  
Not easier may the scribe his oft-conned task

Traced by himself peruse, than he my need  
For whom nor thought had veil nor purport mask.  
Then thus ; "Th' abode of joys to those decreed

Who of earth's part the noblest chose and best,  
The garnered harvest of life's golden seed,  
Hast thou beheld, nor less the term unblest

Of earth's mere failure, where th' unhonoured dead  
Sleep their long sleep by dull oblivion pressed.  
By these and those to the hid meaning led

Nor thine, nor wholly mine ; but in the scroll  
Writ of the Eternal, by th' Eternal read.  
Now hear ; by other paths than these the goal

Is reached ; in other circles traced and twined  
Round the high mount the lustral courses roll.  
But first th' extremest bounds of old assigned

To earthly time and space, this region drear  
Empty and waste, between two worlds confined,  
Traversed by few, our steps must pass ; nor ere

Can'st thou the heights attain, the entrance gate  
Where the great Portress guards the sevenfold sphere ;  
And in like number ranged thy coming wait

The sorcerer-lords of life, by whom each one  
Of praise or blame his portion finds and state.  
On then, nor doubt, nor fear ; the work begun

Is half achieved ; but brief the hour allowed  
To thee, to me, and swift the sand-grains run."  
As when at day's decline a spreading cloud

Wind-driven, in haste ascends the Western height  
And weaves a dying sun's untimely shroud,  
The traveller sees his reckoning short, and light

Outwaned before its hour, and hurries on  
Lest fail his steps bemazed in blinding night,  
'Mid the dark hills where help or shelter none,—

So at that warning voice my loitering tread  
Hasted or seemed to haste, all languor gone.  
Nor long, the level plain at hand outspread

To broken ridges changed, that ever higher  
Rose to the towered-up ranges overhead.

Dark ledges, fringed with many a splintered spire  
Of storm-worn rock ; and close behind them glowed  
Flickering the turmoil of that quenchless fire  
Wrapt round Earth's poles, the Northern gods' abode ;

And steeper showed the path and narrower still,  
And stonier rough the ground our footsteps trode.  
Yet all untired we upward clomb, until

We reached where like some Alpine torrent black  
Loose rocks confusedly piled streamed down the hill,  
Barring all further way, that stony wrack

So wide, so wild was strewed ; the searching eye  
Questioned in vain, nor found of answering track  
Vestige or sign : not Salcombe's cliffs might vie

In steepness with that ruin, nor meets the gaze  
From Petra's piled-up rocks more stern reply.

"Whence now th' ascent ? who knows ? and by what  
ways

Our further course ? and how ?" thus spoke my guide  
Pausing, as one whom new-risen doubts amaze.

"Master," I said, "not all by thee untried

These realms I deem ; how then th' unlooked-for bar  
Thwarting thy hope ? by whom the way denied ?"

And he ; "The Power malign from old at war

With Love's well-ordered reign has wrought this wrong,  
Haply our purposed task intent to mar.

"Vain malice, by heaven's lords to whom belong

Thy fates, derided, as the mischievous play  
Of some rude child the garden flowers among.

Nor at his choice our destined course to stay

By absolute Will ordained ; nor the decree  
Fate-sealed is his to cancel or delay."

Thus while he spoke 'twas mine with fear to see

The topmost marge above, a shape that seemed

As a man's hand,<sup>1</sup> outstretched in air and free ;

And in its grasp a golden circlet gleamed

Fit for a monarch's crown ; and wide o'erhead

Now bright now dim a wavering glory streamed.

Then close beside, from that high verge outspread

Through the faint haze like some ethereal fire

Shone a white flower,<sup>2</sup> lip-tinged with crimson red.

A living thing, instinct with strong desire

It bent and beckoned towards me, till my heart

Answered, as voice to voice responsive quire.

Roused me from that sweet trance with sudden smart

A chill, as when through pleasant airs of spring

Unseen a floated iceberg sends its dart.

For close beside that flower uprose a thing<sup>3</sup>

Of form uncertain, veiled as with a shroud

In dazzling gleam and wide out-pinioned wing.

Terrified, "What may this portend ?" aloud

I cried ; but he, the Master, with stern look,

Finger on lip, my questioning disallowed.

And more than words his silence gave rebuke

With warning mixed and caution, how the hour

Nor vagrant thought nor idle speech might brook.

The outstretched hand, th' o'ershadowing wings, the  
flower

Yet fringed the height ; but pathway none nor stair

Led up from where we stood to that strange tower

<sup>1</sup> Ambition : War and Statesmanship.

<sup>2</sup> Art.

<sup>3</sup> Religion.



Of inaccessible rock, the foot's despair ;

And grey above the vaporous vault ; and cold  
Shook the scant grass-tops in the tremulous air.

Then a fourth sign in tortuous length unrolled

Flaunted those three beside, a banner<sup>1</sup> bright  
With rainbow hues and writings wrought in gold.  
Earth, ocean, changeful day, returning night

Embroidered there were seen, the ways of men,  
And courts, and council-halls, and deeds of might.  
Much I admired ; but ere my curious ken

Had half discoursed these shapes, a doubtful form<sup>2</sup>  
Like smoke-wreaths rolled at eve across the fen,  
Rose to the marge : the blackness of the storm

Was in its hair ; woman's the face, but pale,  
With wrinkles seamed, and vexing cares deform.  
Unlike, though near, in glittering garb and frail

Even as the gauziest insect things that ply  
Their idle dance adown a woodland vale,  
A harlot form<sup>3</sup> had place ; her wanton eye

Challenged the gazer ; in her hand the while  
A bell-ringed timbrel tinkled ceaselessly.  
But from the rest apart, as who nor guile

Nor force in aid required, a youth<sup>4</sup> there stood  
With earnest eyes, and conquest's regal smile.  
Loose o'er his breast a scarf more red than blood

Was cast, unveiled the rest, and fair in hue  
As Parian stone new washed in crystal flood.  
And ever as I looked his stature grew

Taller and yet more tall, and ruddier grew  
The scarf, as roseleaves wet with summer dew.  
"The choicest gift on earth-born man bestowed,

The direst curse, thou seest ; to thee, to all  
Chief help chief hindrance on the upward road.

<sup>1</sup> Creative thought in Literature.

<sup>2</sup> Physical Science and its practical applications.

<sup>3</sup> Sensual Pleasure.

<sup>4</sup> Love.

"The bitter sweet, the honey blent with gall,  
Eros or Anteros ; for weal, for woe  
Him the destroyer, him the saviour call."  
Thus spoke my guide, and pointed to the show  
Ranged on the topmost crag : then sighing, " More  
Not mine is now to tell, nor thine to know ;  
Till She, their Mother and thine, unbar the door  
And bid thee enter, where the sevenfold stream  
In rainbow hues reflects the lustral shore.  
Undimmed there shall thy eyes peruse the dream  
Waking misnamed by those on earth, who move  
Acting or suffering, till with colourless beam  
Arise the real morn, th' essential Love."

## CANTO XII

Introduction : The Earth described by my guide—The Spirit of the Earth is seen and lifts us to the summit of the mountain, with the aid of the seventh apparition, Love—We reach the entrance of the Spirit region, where the Spirit of Earth sits as Portress—My guide asks admittance for me—She answers that the Spirit-world is divided into Seven regions, corresponding to the Seven chief pursuits of man : Love, Ambition, Art, Knowledge, Religion, Science, Pleasure—All have to be traversed, and I am commanded to record what is displayed to me.

“SHE sits, a Queen, a Mother ; crowned her head  
With thorn-twined roses, but the thorns are more ;  
And o'er her face a sightless veil is spread.  
Fair is her robe, but stained with dust and gore,  
With countless forms of beauty manifold  
And ghastliest things betwixt embroidered o'er.  
In her right hand a sceptre of pure gold  
She bears ; its touch is life, its touch is death,  
Makes old the new, and new-creates the old.  
To all that breathes she portions out the breath,  
The force assigns ; then bids it wax or vade<sup>1</sup>  
Through heights above, through depths unknown beneath.  
Love in her light, and hatred in her shade,  
Yet she nor loves, nor hates, nor joys, nor grieves,

<sup>1</sup> “A weakened form of *Fade*” (Skeat.)

"Alike to her if bloom the flowers or fade.  
She knows, she numbers each, the sands, the leaves,

The water-drops, the motes that dance in light,  
And the great depth that each and all receives,  
Are hers, the multitudinous seas, the might

Of storms, the central fires, the crested snow,  
Highest or lowest, equal in her sight.

Her portioned kingdom these, while to and fro

Revolve the zodiac orbits, and perform  
The will that none but He who wills may know."  
Thus spoke my guide, and pointed where a form

Darkened the topmost crags, as dimly shows  
Blackening through the rent veil of drifted storm  
Some mighty headland's ominous shade to those

Who wandering long by trackless seas at last  
Shelter or shipwreck find; even to such close  
Our way was brought, when those sheer heights o'erpast

By the unresisted power whose master-spell  
Chains and sustains all being, our footsteps fast  
Stood on the topmost summit; so befell

A wonder like to his or more, who slept  
Pillowed on stone in Mahanaim's dell,  
Stairfoot of heaven; for he, my Guide, o'erleapt

With me the limits of dream, and in the sooth  
Of the real world with his my presence kept.  
Yet oft to purblind eyes unwonted truth

Wears falsehood's semblance; but the sculptured  
shape

Hides in the quarried marble's mass uncouth.

So while e'en now 'neath that precipitous cape

At gaze we stood, nor path discerned nor sign  
Up the steep barrier, barred all hope's escape,  
Sudden as in still eve a fiery line

Drawn thwart the darkness of a sultry cloud  
Bids its hid rifts in sharp-drawn clearness shine,  
So from the topmost parapet's misty shroud

Down flashed a winding stair, that to our feet  
By ready steps the utmost heights allowed.  
And he<sup>1</sup> who made the sevenfold band complete

In rosiest splendour reached a glowing hand  
Outstretched our upward toil to aid and greet.  
But ere our footsteps well the crowning strand  
Had pressed, the vision faded, from the lawn  
As fades on near approach the rainbow band ;  
And in its place, likest an Autumn dawn

Margin'd by rain-streaks, the opposing way<sup>2</sup>  
Seemed small and dim, 'mid rocky walls withdrawn.  
But in the midst, as through the formless grey

Vaporous, shows the daystar's outlined track  
Now risen, so showed the Portress of the way.<sup>2</sup>  
"Approach," then thus the Master, "courage slack

Is hail to harvest-fields ; be bold, be wise,  
Nor from thy greeting let due reverence lack."  
So near I drew where full those steadfast eyes

Unpassioned met my own ; and to my speech  
Made "Mother" prelude : but at morn as dies  
The sudden breeze that from the Eastern reach

Heralds the sun, then drops, its message o'er,  
As dies the wavelet on the noontide beach,—  
So in that Presence stilled my voice, that more

Sought to declare, tongue-palsied stayed ; and dumb  
Stone-like I stood Earth's empress-power before.  
But my true guide who from the homeless home

Of life's untruth had led me to the land  
Of all that was, and is, and is to come,  
Placed on my down-bowed head his covering hand,

And for my speech his own advanced ; its tone  
With reverence mixed new accents of command.

"Sister, to whom ere years were yet, the throne

Of many-tinted earth was given by Him  
Whose will we work when most we work our own,

<sup>1</sup> Love.

<sup>2</sup> *Sic* MSS.

In sun, or sunlit orb, or star-mist dim,  
Differing in power, yet monarchs all, to reign  
Each in his range to being's outmost rim ;  
Lesser than mine thy planet realm, a grain  
Of dust to vastest Alp, or in compare  
With ocean depths a drop of casual rain.  
Yet royal thou, though less ; thy palace fair ;  
And the bright vine of life in myriad hues  
O'er walls and vault has wove its tapestry there.  
Small orb, but sparkling with the diamond dew  
Of human thought and human love ; a bride  
Whom for himself a god unblamed might choose.  
Thine the dark woods, full rivers, pastures wide  
Spread for thy numberless children ; thy great store  
Open to all ; thy gifts to none denied.  
O many-flickering lake, by the firm shore  
Girt of unchanging life ; O wondrous dream  
Imaged of truth, that wakes to sleep no more.  
Fleeting thy light, yet roseate, from the beam  
Of other suns than thine ; the eternal hills  
Quiver, but fade not from the mirrored stream.  
Rend thou the veil, disperse the mist that fills  
The portal to th' archetypal world, where show  
Even as they are the joys, the cares, the ills,  
The flowers that deck man's path, the thorns that  
strow.

Be these to him declared who suppliant stands  
By silence worthier made thy grace to know,  
The pilgrim of my love, from the vain lands  
Of semblance brought, receive the trust, to thee,  
As me, confided th' all-moulding hands.  
Shaped in thy womb his substance, though by me  
Informed with star-lit fire ; on both his hope  
Is stayed ; but mine the guidance, thine the key."  
Scarce had his words an end, the rock-piled cope  
Was cleft ; and through the rifts a brightness shone

Torrent-like downward poured on ridge and slope.  
And a great voice, most like the mingling tone

Of woods and far-off waves, when storm and sea  
Together surge beneath th' Autumnal zone,  
Thus spoke reply ; " Child of eternity,

Though born in time ; thou, fathered by the star  
Bright lord and leader of the Austral sky,  
Yet not my child the less, though rapt afar

Awhile in other orbs than mine, and here,  
Where things that are not verge on things that are,  
Approach. The secret paths that year by year

In light and shadow on my convex weaved  
Lead up to all men hope, believe, or fear,  
To thee are visible made, no more deceived

By semblant show ; the life o'erlaid by death  
This ; the hid pearl, doubted, denied, believed  
By each in turn. Love's heaven, Ambition's wreath,

Art's witchery, Knowledge sought by land and main,  
Faith's phantasms ; all that swells an idle breath  
With prayers, and moans, and paeans ; Science vain

Of wisdom void ; and Sense of sense the meed  
In its own bounds of pleasure, rest, or pain ;  
The sevenfold Sphinx, the riddle all must read

Or serve unread from sunbright locks to grey,  
With aching brows, tired limbs, and hearts that bleed.  
But thou, not thus thy portion ; pass thy way

Through all my realm, and what thou seest, record,  
Lessons and landmarks of a future day."  
Here ceased th' articulate voice ; the mighty word

Like sound of organ quires, now pealing high  
Now low, now clear, now faint at evening heard  
Far and more far retired ; nor now could I

From sound translate the thought ; nor yet the veil  
Of Nature's flesh-woven life from ear and eye  
Was all withdrawn, nor mortal words avail

To mete th' immortal, marred by symbols weak,

As broken speech of childhood's stammering tale.

There let it rest, nor further answer seek

To the great question ; nor untimely move

The natural bounds ; till through the death-mists bleak

• Gleam the white morn, the reign of deathless Love.



## CANTO XIII

We see a plain, whence rise seven peaks, islanded in a boundless sea : we are suddenly borne thither, and at a gate find the Spirit of Ambition as Guardian—My Guide congratulates me on not having obeyed him in life—The hill of military and civil Ambition rises before us—No one is seen : and I wait by a fountain, on the walls about which are graved the names of great men.

Not yet, not yet that morn ; the imaged ray  
Is but the nebulous sun-streak <sup>1</sup> o'er the face  
Of tropic night, where winds the zodiac way  
'Mid the twelve guardians of the yearly trace  
High in meridian heavens, then fades before  
The manifest day, broad reddening in its place.  
Such is the vision ; yet, O my friend, the more  
My debt to thee, who through th' uncertain night  
Hast imaged forth true day's uptreasured store ;  
And the sun's course in that faint cone of light  
Is rightly tracked ; and in the semblance strange  
Of the vain dream is substance given to sight.  
We stood ; far off in mottled interchange  
Of light and shade, the plain beyond, uprose  
Peak over peak, a mountain's sevenfold range.  
And midmost there, as in a petalled rose

<sup>1</sup> The Zodiacal Light.

The central gold, glittered a dazzling blaze,  
An ever quivering splendour, such as throws  
Some crystalline fount, struck by the noonday rays

Of the clear sun, where plexed in rainbow chain  
Sparkles the plashing water's diamond maze.  
But hills and plain beyond to the utmost strain

Of sight's survey, unspecked by sail or oar  
Lay the large stillness of a circling main  
Unfathomably calm ; along the shore

Of that charmed isle, their ward, the waters slept  
Secure in their own depth ; no breakers' roar  
Was theirs nor tidal flow ; no seabird swept

That silvery floor, where far from change or time  
Immutability her throne had set.

But the desire which erst in boyhood's prime

Th' unseen to see, the unknown to touch and know,  
Impelled my restless way from clime to clime,  
Drove me, as when Autumnal storm-blasts blow

Flies the driven leaf, and through the gusty air  
Forth whirled the circling swifts confusedly go.  
Sheer the descent ; nor ledge nor rock-hewn stair

Waited the foot ; nor had the eagle's wing  
Through that great void availed our flight to bear.  
And how we passed I know not, nor can bring

Back to remembrance aught, so swift our change  
Downward from those black rocks to where the Spring  
In fadeless beauty clothed that island strange ;

And high 'mid forest belts of densest green  
Towered in seven purple peaks the central range.  
These and the shore betwixt a leafy screen

Continuous fenced them round, as guard from view  
Blank walls of palace-pride some Eastern Queen.  
But as we left the shore, and nearer drew

Crossing the sunny slope to where the shade  
Of that high wood was wet with sunless dew,  
Midmost a gateway set our steps delayed ;

Of gold or gilded was the arch, and bore  
Sceptres and crowns, and trophied arms displayed.  
And in fair letters ; " Enter ; this the door

Of Power," was written there ; and close beside  
Was one, half seen when the high crags before,  
Wondering, that hand and crown in outstretched pride

Had I beheld ; but now the form complete  
What erst was hid to curious sight supplied.

Dark iron with gold embossed from head to feet

His armour wrapped him round ; and on his brow  
A star that with heaven's huntsman<sup>1</sup> might compete.  
Proud was his look, as who might scarce allow

To others place, likest a conquering chief  
When at his feet submissive foemen bow.

" Well known to me thou comest," in accents brief

Nor without scorn his speech ; " yet enter here  
Even thou, though scant thy garland, sere thy leaf."  
Abashed I heard, yet lingered, " Shame nor fear

Befit thee," thus the Master ; " scorn with scorn  
Repel ; who wins may slight the loser's jeer.

The phantom prize on earth by thee forborne

In phantom form thou seest ; the illusion vain

By many sought, the crown in aching worn

By many heads, noblest of mortal strain ;

They faded as it faded ; of their glory

Annals miswrit, misread, alone remain.

Till in th' appointed time the earth grown hoary

Their trace forgets ; as melt from the clear blue

Light clouds, mouldered the scroll, forgot the story ;

But the end is not yet." He ceased, and drew

My steps with his where 'midst the wooded close  
Wound a low path, leaf-fenced from outer view.

This too we passed ; and now before us rose

The first of those seven hills, beheld afar,

Now to our steps permitted, to disclose

<sup>1</sup> Sirius, as the star attendant on the constellation Orion.

Th' abode of those bold spirits who erst by war  
Or statecraft strove to scale the perilous height  
Where sit the charioteers of Empire's car  
Drawn by her millions. Round I cast my sight  
Eager those great ones to behold who shone  
Meteors or stars of earth's tempestuous night.  
But on that mountain visible shape was none  
To meet the questioning eye ; the noontide heat  
Glared on untenanted lawn and whitening stone.  
"Awhile," then spoke my guide, "thy weary feet  
Stay, where yon fount fresh from the mountain  
breast,  
Scarce seen for clearness, skirts the marble seat  
Hard by the source ; The season given to rest  
Refuse not ; oft what toil has sought in vain  
Is of a timely pause self-offered guest."  
Then where to its first slant upheaved the plain  
In green and gold, he pointed to a cell  
Of marble blocks rough-hewn but pure of stain ;  
And 'neath the low-browed vault a brimming well  
Poured sea-ward forth its wave ; and the cool shade  
Like a broad curtain thwart the doorway fell.  
Hither by jasper steps of easiest grade  
Fixed in the turfy slope, we upward went,  
Till at the door a pause our footsteps made.  
Then by the rill that ceaseless from the rent  
Close at our feet outstreamed we sat ; the gloom  
Unwonted, all within to darkness blent ;  
Till on the fronting wall a restless loom  
Of light, reflex from those pure waters, traced  
To gradual sight the fount and vaulted room.  
With mighty names the walls around were graced  
Of ancient fame, honoured memorials all ;  
And some were fresh, some worn and part defaced.  
But while I strove to read, the plashing fall  
Of th' ever-bubbling waters, and the dance

Of those wan lights on roof and floor and wall,  
Dazed my tired sense, as chill-born mists advance

O'er a calm sea, so swift that ere men know  
Whence risen, they close them in ; so closed the trance  
On mind and eye ; the indoors gloom, the glow

Without, the ripple of th' unresting rill,  
Nor sound nor motion else, above, below  
All hushed in seemful sleep, more slumbrous still

Than convent courts when August's noontide beam  
Whitens from base to crest Caserta's hill,<sup>1</sup>  
Wrought on me there ; till thought dissolved in dream

Of wildest shapes confused, a phantom train,  
The dust of sleep, upstirred by Morpheus' team,  
Soon to subside, as leaves on Autumn's plain

Whirl to the breeze awhile, then strew the ground  
In windless shelter heaped : all things attain  
Or soon or late their own appointment, found

Toil's ultimate guerdon ; who most strongly strove  
Securest rest, Love's champions, girded round  
By the everlasting arms of favouring Love.

<sup>1</sup> Near Naples. The convent is S. Maria del Angelo.

## CANTO XIV

I sleep, and a dream carries me as a boy to the Yarmouth coast,  
reading Plutarch, and full of ambitious thoughts—I wake :  
a trumpet is heard, and the Roman legions appear, Julius  
Caesar in their midst—I lament the downfall of his Empire  
—He tells me that I am now in Elysium : describes his  
career, and the ultimate survival of Rome after the Empire  
had fallen—He passes away with a sigh.

THE tangled star-maze of th' abyss ; the zone  
Twelve-blazoned of mid heaven ; the nightly change  
Waxing or waning of th' unquiet moon,  
Th' alternate day, the seasons' yearly range,  
The balanced rod nice-poised, and what beside  
Man's use has found or skill devised of strange,  
Measurements all, outportioned from the tide  
That measures them by hours and days and years  
As custom wills, or shows of sense divide ;  
Time, on whose forward pinions hopes and fears  
Thick cluster, on whose path o'ergone remain  
Dead memories, dead regrets, dead smiles, dead tears,  
Might tell how long fettered in slumber's chain  
I lay within that cell ; but time as men  
Count its slow pulse, in that new land was none,  
For all was present there ; the questioned "When ?"  
Had but one answer, "Now" ; the careless hours

Had loosed their idle cars, unhooked the rein.  
But I whom to this rest the fateful Powers

Had brought, was by the vision borne afar,  
Where o'er brown marsh and barren sand-hills lowers  
Cloud-veiled th' Icenian<sup>1</sup> sky ; a land of shade

Edged by a cold green sea ; and on the shore  
The ebbing tide a sea-weed fringe had made.  
There on the sand reclined I seemed once more,

As erst in ready youth, to turn the page  
By Chaeronea's chronicler<sup>2</sup> placed in store  
Of Greece and Rome ; heirlooms of nobler age

To lesser times and men : once more I read  
Of mighty deeds, high thoughts and counsel sage,—  
So ruled the mirrored dream ; till overhead

A crown with laurel wreathed of regal gold,  
Fit meed of high emprise to victory led,  
Stooped to my reach ; I clutched it ; but, behold,

Ere yet my fingers closed it round, 'twas gone ;  
And in its stead a formless vapour cold  
Circled me there ; then broke the dream : alone

But wakeful now I sat, and watched the spring  
Chequer with threads of light the vaulted stone.  
Then, as far off first heard the tempest's wing

Slow flaps in muffled beats, till nearer grown  
On their full sweep the clouds their death-bolts bring,  
So through the stilly air a trumpet blown

Was faintly heard, then louder, till the place  
Shook as a storm-blown tree, so shrill the tone ;  
And flutes, and drums, and tramp of measured pace,

With clash of arms, and voices harsh between,  
Thickened and grew ; as when the hounded chase  
Bursts in full cry from 'yond the forest screen,

And sight to sound gives meaning, so my ear  
Lent form and substance to the cause unseen.  
Not long, for now alternate helm and spear

<sup>1</sup> Norfolk.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch.

With sword and pike and bannered sign displayed,  
Wave upon wave the serried ranks drew near ;  
Standard and crest, and short home-thrusting blade,

The conquerors of a world, from Britain's coast  
And Atlas hoar to Tigris' palm-fringed wave.

O unreturning greatness ! glory lost

Too soon ! for ever lost ! so mustering stood  
Full told my eyes before that giant host.

Then right from left divided, as the flood

Of the Erythraean sea, when cloven in twain,  
Pathway to Israel's wonder-working rod ;

And a great cry like thunder, when the rain

Stayed in mid down-pour gives the lightning road,

Of "Caesar !" rent the air ; then stilled again,

As with slow step but firm, and eyes that glowed

Instinct with quenchless fire, the form of him

Whose name is one with empire, forward strode.

But dim the glories on his crest, and dim

The laurel crown, withered and stained, that yet  
Wove its vain memories round the helmet rim.

In his pale face deep-furrowed care had set,

Blended with pitying scorn, the lines of thought

Love twinned with hate, and triumph with regret.

Downwards I cast my eyes, such reverence wrought

In me that greatness ruined, that deep decay

Of giant strength to phantom weakness brought ;

Disenthroned Hyperion of a vaster day ;

And much I grieved that Nature's noblest birth  
Should like her meanest pass in shade away.

O labours ill-bestowed ! O little worth

Of prize, hard sought, late found, untimely lost !

Dross bought with silver, harvest reaped in dearth !

Where now the trophies by that matchless host

Reared on a prostrate world ? thy glories where,

Imperial Rome, undying Maro's <sup>1</sup> boast ?

<sup>1</sup> Virgil.



Fallen are the leaves, the branches barked and bare,

Hewn down the trunk, the very roots uprent

Of that great tree, the She-wolf's fateful lair.

Keen his dark eyes that awful Presence bent

On mine, suffused with tears ; then said, "Thy grief

On mine, on Rome's decay is idly spent.

Not surer fades and falls the autumnal leaf

Than fade and fall earth's empires, though the green

Of some more lasting show, of some more brief.

But greater than the Done has ever been

The Doer ; and Will outlasts what Will has made ;

That the firm substance ; this the fading screen.

I know not who thou art, nor how conveyed

Hither, nor greatly care ; but sure I deem

Not without cause thou walk'st the phantom glade

Elysium called of old, the partial dream

Foreshadowing perfect truth, exempt by fate

From Stygian bond, or draught of Lethe's stream.

So to fair earth returned may'st thou relate

What here thou saw'st or heard'st, the joy, the pain,

Their doom who climb the difficult heights of state.

Towns sacked, fields wasted, blood poured forth like  
rain

From Gaul's full rivers and Britain's fog-veiled shore

To Libya's sands, and red Pharsalia's plain,

These were my onward path, till earth no more

Gave prize or space for conquest ; all was mine,

Till scaled the rock-stair Sacred named of yore

To the Capitolian height ; a god the shrine

Received me, born of gods ; so spoke the voice

Of Mantua's bard, nor erred the heaven-taught line.

Then, Lord of evil and good, I made the choice

Of good ; a wounded world I healed, and bade

Who feared securely dwell, who mourned rejoice.

In fair Astraea's<sup>1</sup> wreath I hid the blade

<sup>1</sup> Justice.

“Of lawless war ; the debt of tears and blood,  
An Empire’s due, my peaceful sway repaid.  
Nor long misrule succeeding, nor the brood

Of despot heirs, my portioned empire’s shame,  
Nor the brute violence of the Northern flood,  
Has all o’erthrown the fabric on my name

Upreared, nor all the mighty lines effaced  
Graven by my skill, nor turned my praise to blame.  
Such art the structure crowned, such forethought based,

For others, not for me ; strong to outlast  
The heart that willed it, and the hand that traced.  
What portion mine, behold !”—Aside he cast

The purple-broidered robe, where scarred his breast  
’Mid many wounds the deadliest and the last  
By caitiff Brutus made, at Rome’s behest

Slaying her slayer ; even he, whom least that deed  
Behoved, of all best trusted, loved the best.  
Such end ambition finds, th’ awarded meed

Of self-sought greatness, crime avenged by crime,  
The deathful harvest of a poison seed.

Then as from spring-tide fields the glittering rime,

Work of the keen-starred night, dissolves away  
Soon as their slanted height the sunbeams climb,  
Banner and sword and spear and helmed array

Traceless from sight were gone ; and with a sigh  
Sadder than words that Mightiest passed away.

And he, my brother guide, approaching nigh,

But whence I knew not, roused me ; soft he laid  
His hand on mine, and words of purport high  
Spoke that my song repeats not ; from the shade

Of that cool dome we went by lawn and grove,  
Where penance-bound to exile, haunt the glade

Ambition’s outcasts from the realm of Love.

## CANTO XV

We continue the ascent, as if up a volcano's side : groans heard underground—A dense cloud comes over us : then a lightning-flash, and the spirit of Oliver Cromwell passes by in the storm—I see him in vision standing beside his own corpse : he laments his loneliness of heart—My guide explains his sorrow as caused by his crimes—Daylight returns ; I see many Greek, Roman, and Carthaginian leaders ; Scythians and Tartars ; European generals : all men of pure heroism.

THOUGHTFUL, as who from kingly palace back

Return, and weigh the converse held, we went  
Where on the hill-side wound our upward track.  
Steep was the way, 'mid massy boulders rent,

So seemed, by earthquake force, and tumbled mound  
Of mortared brick or stone at random blent.

And evermore our steps beneath the ground

Shifted and shook, and like a mandrake's groan  
Replied from deeps unseen a hollow sound.

Yet with bright flowers that mountain turf was strown

Of thousand hues ; and the soft-breathing air  
Mingled its gusts with music's distant tone.

Such, if with greater things may less compare,

In Spring's best days the winding slopes that smile  
Where bursts through Aetna's rifts the Typhon glare ;  
A dread with beauty overlaid ; the while

Loaded as with strange weight my weary feet  
Made scant fulfilment of th' accustomed toil.

Veiled in dim clouds the sun-disk, yet with heat

Heavy the air ; and far the mountain peak  
In faintest outline rose my eye to greet.

"Master and guide," I questioned, "why so weak

My limbs, erst strong to labour ? whence the gloom  
Thus overspread ? and whose the moans that speak  
Of grief, unresting in th' all-resting tomb ?

For tomb this mount I deem ; such semblance bear  
The ruined heaps, tangled with random bloom."

"Brother," his answer thus began ; but ere

To sequent speech the words were shaped, there fell  
Darkness on darkness round us ; and the air  
Grew thick with formless dread, as when the spell

Of Samovedian wizards darkens o'er  
The frost-bright stars with smoke-clouds breathed of hell,  
Round the doomed fishers by Alaska's shore.

And peal on peal quick following, onward came  
Mixed with a whirlwind blast the thunder's roar ;  
Till flashed 'mid all a waft of sheeted flame,

As though Heaven's vault to fire were turned ; and  
through

The quick succeeding crash was heard the name  
Of him whom Marston's field and Worcester's knew

The striker-down of thrones, the iron rod  
That shattered friend and foeman, old and new.  
O'er necks of kings and king-like councils trod

His heavy foot, nor paused till reached the height,  
The perilous height, where man is paired with god.  
There more than king he stood ; nor banded might,

Nor murder's whetted blade, nor vengeful hate,  
Nor life-slaying care that knows not day from night,  
Could quell that stubborn will, till the dark fate,

Bearer of victory's wreath twice proved in war,  
With the third mercy crowned the destined date

That ranked the mortal where th' immortals are ;  
While from the storm-swept land that greatness passed  
As passes from heaven's scroll a cancelled star.  
Then quenched the lightning, stilled the gusty blast,  
And a grey light as of the fabled morn  
When sun nor moon were yet, the mount o'ercast,  
Where on a couch of gold inwove with thorns  
What seemed a warrior lay ; and by the bed,  
With hand close-pressed to brow as one that mourns,  
A living form beside the motionless dead  
In very likeness stood, as stands a friend  
By friend himself has slain, nor turns his head  
Though in the sight be torture's worst ; so blend  
Past joys enhanced by present wretchedness,  
And the great anguish of the manifest end ;  
And his full loss he knows, yet none the less  
Clings to the shadow of the day gone by  
To clothe or bare his spirit's nakedness.  
"O lonely path by which I clomb so high !  
O lonely height where throned and crowned I sate !"  
Thus spoke the voice of that fallen majesty :  
"No friend, for friendship claims an equal state ;  
No love ; for love ne'er shared a partner throne ;  
No truth ; for truth turns from a palace gate.  
The beast its fellow finds ; in loving tone  
Bird answers bird ; the common insect race  
Together herds ; the field's wild flower alone  
Blooms not, but clusters with its kind in place ;  
I only friendless, loveless ; mine to hear  
No sociate voice ; to see no trustful face.  
Alone I hope, joy, triumph, grieve, or fear,  
Alone unloved I live, unmourned I die,  
My honour smirched, my guerdon vanished clear."  
Such heavy words he spoke ; then with a sigh  
Drearier than moan of wintry winds that wail  
Round snow-choked doors when lowers December's sky,

Made fitting close to the else unfinished tale ;

As though th' unmanly scorn and shame to tell  
Wrought on the dead no words might there avail :  
Then faded slow from sight, while as in spell

Entranced I stood ; and faint, and yet more faint  
Came the sad sounds, Ambition's late-tolled knell.  
While thus my guide ; " What ails thee ? the complaint

Thou hear'st, and hearing mourn'st, the meed displays  
Of mightiest deeds deformed by self-ful taint.  
He and his like the temple of high praise

Reared on the marsh of wrong, and saw too late  
Sunk in its depths the pile they strove to raise.  
Ruined the massive tower ; the gilded state

With fire consumed ; the statue fair o'erthrown,  
The tree cut down, the garden desolate.  
Yet not in vain they strove ; nor thou bemoan

As profitless all their toil ; the plastered screen<sup>1</sup>  
Flakes off, but firm abides the central stone."  
Even as he ceased, o'erhead the cloudy screen<sup>1</sup>

Parted, as mists of chilly morning bred  
Break in thin wreaths from off the sun-warmed green.  
Light blew the mountain breeze ; the sounds of dread  
Ceased from beneath our feet ; on mound and stone  
Tall grass and glittering flowers their carpet spread.  
By field and copse bright the glad day-star shone,

Not ours but like to ours ; the slanting ground  
Slope above slope built up the mountain cone.  
" Here, till the years complete their lustral round,

They dwell, the brave, who pure of factious crime  
In fair-fought field their brows with laurel crowned.  
Here Peleus' child and Ammon's, with the prime

Of the old heroic bands by heroes led,  
From Argive shores, or Haemus'<sup>2</sup> sterner clime.  
The champions here in Latian warfare bred,

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Mountain-range bounding Thrace on the North.

“Decius, Camillus, and th’ unsullied fame  
Of great Marcellus, and the Libyan dead  
Followers of him who on the altar flame

Swore the dire hatred that nor Alps could bar,  
Nor Cannae satiate, nor lost Zama tame.

And others there from barbarous realms afar,  
Scythian, Albanian, Tartar, and the bands  
Of later days and new-found forms of war  
To happier times unknown ; but valour stands

To its own centre true, whate’er of change  
Wrought in its guise by varying arts or lands.  
All these in honour strove, nor from that range

To meaner ends declined, nor aught allowed  
From noble thought and loyal purpose strange.”  
Not inly heard alone, nor all aloud

Such words were borne, while o’er the mountain high  
Roved my free gaze, unchecked by mist or cloud.  
As when long days of rain are past, the sky

With countless flecks of chequered stillness gleams,  
Snow-white at noon, at eve of crimson dye,  
So showed on that clear height in following streams

Of bright procession forms, now silver bright,  
Now reddened as with blood, then changed as dreams  
Change to pale shades confused ; from utmost sight

They pass, as from sea-margined cliffs beheld  
Lost in converging lines the sea-birds’ flight.  
So by the trodden path our course we held

Cross the wide mount, conversing much on those  
Whom greed of power or lust of fame compelled  
On loftiest deeds and noblest, though the close

Oft marred the outset, and the baser strove  
Still with the worthier sense ; till blanched the rose,  
Red stained to white in lustral baths of Love.

## CANTO XVI

Sky and landscape change : vision of the Russian steppes in winter : burning of Moscow—Napoleon appears : his downfall and greatness in ruin—He describes his career ; laments his ambition, and tells his thoughts of glory and defeat, as contrasted with the life of his peasant-guide, when descending the Alps to Marengo : recognising the peasant's as happier than his own.

WHEN from the narrowed vault of wintry days  
Northward returns Heaven's king, and hour by hour  
In wider circles darts his quickening rays,  
And loosed from bonds of numbing frost the power  
Of life Promethean swells in every bough  
To glistening green, or white unfolding flower,  
Then joys the peasant lad as to the plough  
He yokes the stall-pent team, and cheerly loud  
Whistles, of mist and chill forgetful now ;  
Then if by chance from the dim North a cloud  
Swiftly up-swept, blots daylight's silvery beam,  
And all night long expands its icy shroud  
O'er earth and heaven, till late the dawning gleam  
Reveals but undistinguished snow-heaps, sad  
The plough-boy stands beside th' unharnessed team ;  
So when with better hopes my heart was glad  
In gladness of that mount, a shadow vast



In joyless veil once more that vision clad.  
Whence risen that cloud I marked not, but aghast  
Felt its approach ere seen ; a sudden chill  
Smote me, as when th' eclipse with ominous haste  
Devours the midday sun-god ; grove and hill

Were lost to view, erased the guiding way  
As sand tracks by the advancing sea-waves, till  
Wide stretched around a level waste and grey

Of snow-drift, ash-bestrewn, and foul with blood,  
And phantom shapes distort, and mere dismay.  
But where on the low marge a fir-spiked wood

Belted the plain, uprose a flickering glow  
Of cities fire-consumed, yet unsubdued.

Nor sound was here nor life ; the carrion crow

Had left the wolf-gnawed bones ; the ashes, cold  
As those who lit them erst, bestrewed the snow.

Only like one lost in a trackless wold

Moved a grey-mantled form, with brows severe,  
And folded arms, and braid of tarnished gold.  
And the great crown that Monza's<sup>1</sup> sons revere,

Iron and gold, his temples girt ; his eye  
Nor lit with hopeful ray, nor dimmed with fear.  
Not ruined, but ruin's self in imagery

So showed that awful Shape ; above the gloom  
Of a lost world made fitting canopy.

Before his steps with blood-stained claws and plume

What eagle seemed or vulture ill defined  
Hovered, the phantom of a vampire tomb.

Southward the Emperor bent his way ; behind

The fire-girt snows, a blood-lake broad before,  
And shattered limbs of men the pathway lined.  
But, far the corpse-strewn plain and blood-marsh o'er

On the low sky in cloudlike distance rose  
A barren rock, girt by the Atlantic's roar.

<sup>1</sup> Near Milan : a city in which the "Iron Crown" has been long kept.

—Last of the giant kinship ! last of those

Who sole a world outpoise, the Titan brood  
Conquerors of gods, and conquered in the close !  
Too late thy birth, Napoleon ! the young blood

Of earth was spent ; the weakness of her age  
Mixed with thy strength, that else had well withstood  
Fortune's blind chance, and envy's banded rage :

But the clay marred the iron ; thy tale was writ  
Too large for dwindling Europe's narrowed page.  
Now torn the scroll, in nameless fragments split

The statue lies, 'mid weeds and shards o'erthrown,  
And over its wreck weak shadows pass and flit.  
Yet the great Will, the spirit's deathless throne,

In realms of truth and spirit abides, possessed  
Not now in others' knowledge, but its own.

"But thou who fain would'st know what worst or best

Awaits earth's chiefs, to him of conquerors known  
Mightiest and last, be thy desire addressed."

Not with more eager haste to springs foreshown

Cool in the rock's cleft side may travellers turn,  
Driven on by thirst almost to madness grown  
When shadeless all the ways in sunshine burn,

Than I, made bold by my consenting guide,  
Drew nigh to that great ghost intent to learn.  
But to my question turned not nor replied

Awhile the iron-crowned phantom, with fixed gaze  
Still on the distance bent, as who descried  
Something that verge beyond of dateless days,

Till dim his eyes with tears, and sad his look  
Bent on me from that far-off island's haze.

Then spoke ;—"From loneliest heights unmarked the  
brook

Descends ; then swollen to shoreless tide below  
For the great ocean's self is oft mistook.

So mightiest years from smallest day-dawns flow,  
And mine were of the mightiest, till the crown

“Of Europe’s empire widened to my brow.  
Kings I upraised at will, at will cast down ;  
Nations I made or marred ; their lesser life  
Bloomed in my smile, or withered at my frown.  
O ill-won prize with thankless labour rife !

Empty of rest or joy ! O toil to toil  
Successive linked, and strife begot by strife !  
Till the once-purposed goal in wild turmoil

Wavering is lost to sight, as ’mid the wave  
The beacon-buoy when maddening storms upboil.  
Of others lord, of my own self the slave

Was I ; till tired of fame and power and throne  
Back to the abyss its misused gifts I gave.  
Yet through the blinding mists around me thrown

By my own splendour, once a better day  
With short-houred gleam on my life’s pathway shone.  
Now hear. What time from Alpine slopes the May

Had stripped their yearly veil, with the great host  
To me and conquest vowed, I passed my way.  
Vanquished behind us frowned the glacier frost,

No barrier now ; and sea-like stretched beneath  
Marengo’s plains, sure victory’s promised boast.  
While down the slippery paths, a slackened wreath,

Unwound the sequent files of those who then  
Were life, and strength, and courage, and hopeful breath.  
I looked and gloried in my might, of men

The chiefest I, sun of the secular day  
That reaps the harvest of time’s whitening grain.  
For in my grasp I knew the guerdon lay,

Not Austria’s spoils alone ; but all the worth  
Frontiered from Volga’s banks to Calpe’s<sup>1</sup> bay ;  
The five-zoned world my throne, the populous earth

Held in my empire’s fee, the future years  
Named of my name, and cycled from my birth.  
An instant, all was changed, as changed appears

<sup>1</sup> Gibraltar.

“The shifted scene where meets the nightly throng  
To acted semblance of past joys or tears.  
I saw till the hot life those paths along  
Death-chilled to skeletons, strewed the mountain  
side,  
Torn shreds of flags, and rusted arms among.  
Nor these alone, but all that vision wide  
Of empire nor by space nor years confined  
Shrivelled and scant its former lines belied.  
A painted screen it seemed where night-long wind  
And rain have wreaked their will, a hollow shell,  
Of rocket fire the smirched and shattered rind.  
Then a great darkness o’er my spirit fell,  
And grief of wasted life, and labour vain,  
As his who spellbound toils, yet knows the spell.  
But at my side, close by my bridle rein  
That morn a peasant lad of mountain race  
Guided my pathway to the Lombard plain,  
Of sturdy limb, crisp hair, and sun-tanned face,  
With laughing eyes, quick glance, and careless tread,  
Unshod, yet careless of the rough-strewn ways.  
O happy life, by its own purpose led  
In youth, and strength, and joy, to the ultimate  
goal  
Of satiate being from its own banquet fed ;  
One with the winds that blow, the stars that roll,  
One with itself, in its own self complete ;  
Part, but in concord with th’ existent whole.  
I saw and knew, O knowledge bitter-sweet !  
His the true substance, mine the shadow vain,  
His the rich treasure, mine the tinselled cheat.  
O jewel, not mine ! O freedom from the chain  
That bound me ! Seen from far, apprized, confest,  
Joy known and measured by contrasted pain !  
It might not be ; nor ever to my breast  
Returned that envied pang, that mirrored bliss,

“Visioned, yet real, possessing, not possessed, )  
To earth by life denied, restored in this

At last, at last, by cycled years that move  
Through pain remorseful to the pardoning kiss,  
Seal of new life, sealed by the lips of Love.”

## CANTO XVII

Napoleon regrets that in the peasant of the Alps he failed to recognise his own true star—My guide comforts him—We enter a fair meadow ; the region of ambitious Statesmen and Counsellors—The first who speaks is Thomas Cromwell ; he describes his power and downfall ; the results of his work for England console him—He points out the two statesmen associated with him as true national benefactors, the elder Küprili of Anatolia, Grand Vizier ; and Iyeyas, first of the Japanese war-ministers or Shogans.

THEN as his speech he ended that great ghost

Full on me turned his eyes, and said, "To thee  
Is given what,—mine an hour,—by me was lost.  
He my true guide, lord of my destiny,

The Star that ruled my ways, in visible guise  
My comrade deigned for that short morn to be :  
He to the heart revealed, though to the eyes

Veiled in ambiguous form, too soon withdrawn  
'Mid earth-sprung mists, light of the eternal skies."  
No more he said, but upward gazed, at dawn

As he who seeks, nor finds, some vanished star  
Through the pale haze o'er heaven's pure blackness  
drawn.

But with a smile like hers who from long war

Her spouse returning greets, and pitying sees  
Scarce healed across his unhelmed brow the scar

That tells of combat past, till by degrees

Pain's memory fades in present happiness  
Of rest secure, and conflict lapped in peace ;—  
Even with such pitying look, of worst distress

Healing and balm, my guide beheld, and gave  
To pride remorseful pardoning love's caress.

Then vanished all, the fires, the snow-piled grave

Of perished hosts, the blood-stream's girdling zone,  
The far-seen isle of doom, the prisoning wave,  
Ambition's sum ; like smoke they passed ; alone

At gaze we stood ; before us meadows green  
And tufted groves, by bluest heaven o'ershone.  
A realm of ordered calm, a restful scene

Welcome to mind and eye, where nought of dread  
Or past distress or present ill was seen.

"Master," I questioned thus, "whose care has led

Hither my steps unthwarted, to the abode  
Of these the truly living, miscalled the dead,  
Tell me where now the rocks that late we trode

'Mid storm and dreariest gloom ? and whose the land  
Fair spread to sight ? on whom this peace bestowed ?"  
Answered my guide, "By many a path is planned

Th' ascent of earth's high thrones, but loftiest climb  
The masters of the sword, and firmest stand ;  
Rightly the noblest held ; but marred by crime

Too oft the crown they gain, and dim with rust  
Of tears and blood the glories of their time.

Like cloud-built towers at eve dissolved, their trust

Fades with the fading years, till each proud name  
Once high as heaven, lies vile in common dust.  
Eagles of barren heights ! Less vaunt their fame

Attends, who strove with hands unarmed to seize  
Dominion's helm, the olive-wreath their claim,  
In court or hall or council ; next to these,

But lesser far, shalt thou behold the band  
Of patriots called, vanes of the popular breeze.

“Mid the still pastures of this guarded land

The statesmen-shepherds bide, till slow the hours  
Bring round, its course complete, the dial hand.

And green the leaves above, and bright the flowers,

But fruitless all, and sighs the breezes are  
That stir the boughs, watered with tears for showers.”

He spoke, and pointed where nor near nor far

Figures I saw that measured moved and slow,  
As loth by vulgar haste their state to mar.<sup>1</sup>

Towards us their way was bent, in seemly row

And rich attire, yet grave, as theirs who pass  
From palace gates to grace some courtly show ;  
With even steps they trod the yielding grass

Till front to front we stood, with greeting fair  
Made and returned, befitting time and place.

Then they, “At whose behest th’ unfooted stair

That hither leads was yours to climb ? and how  
From different worlds together linked ye fare ? ”

Answered my guide ; “She whom yourselves avow

Mother and Queen our path assigned, and gave  
Free passage o’er the mystic mountain’s brow.

What kinship mortals with immortals have

Is his with mine, and both are blent in one ;  
Nor ours is more to tell, nor yours to crave.”

As a grey lake touched by the morning sun

Sparkles in countless smiles, so brightly there  
On every face the sign of welcome shone.

And I, though wondering much, nor all aware

By whom the greeting given, yet joyed as he  
Who from strange lands returned his native air  
Feels on his cheek once more, and joys to see

Sights to old days familiar once, that bring  
Past thoughts, past loves, in act again to be.

Then from the midmost of that honoured ring

Came forward three, in form distinct and vast,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Divina Commedia*, Purg. iii. 10.



But kinglike each, or little less than king.  
And one, the stateliest of the band, whose breast

With heavy folds of twisted gold was hung,  
Foremost advanced to me his speech addressed.  
Gentle his words as from a honeyed tongue

To courteous utterance framed ; but cold his eye  
As night's keen star the leafless boughs among.  
And thus ; " To perilous lordship destiny

Twice lent my name ; even now hast thou beheld  
The second Cromwell ; know the first in me.  
The despot will that at a breath dispelled

Rome's secular fabric, that nor creed nor law  
But its own self avowed, I captive held  
Chained by my stronger purpose, bent to draw

All to itself, as whirlpools draw the tide  
That makes them, to their all-devouring maw.  
Nor gracious youth, nor reverend age, nor pride

Of high descent, nor pity's oft-urged plea  
Might my keen axe-edge blunt or turn aside.  
Alone of that dark breast I kept the key

Where dwelt the stores of kingly power, the will  
That life or death assigned with like decree,  
Potent for good, omnipotent for ill.

Long years my charge I held, nor faltered, sure  
In all my Master's dictates to fulfil.  
But he, now absolute grown, through me secure

Where erst he feared, the load of thankfulness  
His trustless heart no longer might endure.  
So sweet to bitter turned by sweet's excess ;

And my true good transformed by his false mind  
To crime than which all other crime was less.  
Wheat-sheaves from tare-sown fields shall reapers bind,

Lilies on thorns, on brambles grapes shall grow  
Ere a king's slave a grateful king shall find."

Pausing, his hand across a furrowed brow

He passed, as who would brush from memory's glass

Of some ill shapes the yet too present show.  
Then said ; " Heaven's work abides, earth's pageants  
pass ;

The good remains, the ill dissolves away  
As clouds from skies, or shadows off the grass.  
Not all for thee, false Henry, was the day  
Of the great things I wrought ; nor shall thy stain  
Sully the gold of England's orient ray.

As some fierce storm from off the stagnant plain  
Impetuous drives the marsh-sprung pest, afar  
Blown by the gale, outwashed by the wild rain,  
Such was my course ; the remnant ills of war

Like heaped-up corpses left ; the festering wrong  
Of ease misused, and custom's leaden bar,  
These from the land I swept ; the prostrate throng  
Felt in my storm their healing ; to my name

A despot's hate, a nation's thanks belong."  
Again he paused ; and I ; " Of praise and blame  
Much hast thou earned, O Cromwell ! but the gold  
Wastes not, though sharp the test, and fierce the flame."  
" Enough ; " he smiled and answered ; " now behold,

Conjoint to my expectant hour, the twain  
Worthiest with me in honour's text enrolled.  
He<sup>1</sup> on my right who from Amasia's plain

Called to Byzantium's towers, with pitiless sword  
Yet pitying, cleft the links of the dull chain  
By licensed greed and old corruption's horde

Coiled round the giant limbs of Othman's brood,  
And youth for age, and praise for shame restored.  
And Küprili's name broad-writ in lines of blood

Glow like the beacon-fire that crowns the height  
To guide the Crescent bark through storm and flood.  
But he the third thou seest in equal light

Of statesman-radiance robed, alone upbore

<sup>1</sup> The elder Küprili, Grand Vizier of Mahomet IV. : sometimes styled the Richelieu of Turkey.

"A falling empire's weight, so deem aright.  
Iyeyas<sup>1</sup> he, who by fair Biwa's shore  
Victor of trait'rous wrong and civil broil,  
All negligent pride and careless ease forbore,  
And helmed him to long years of healsome toil  
Till firm the fabric rose, no more as erst  
To foreign greed and rival schemes a spoil.  
Mightiest and noblest heart of those inhearsed  
'Mid Shiba's shrines, or Nikho's cypress grove ;  
Hero of later days, yet with the first  
Writ by Japan in lines of grateful love."

<sup>1</sup> First of the Japanese war-ministers.

## CANTO XVIII

The folly of selfish Ambition—We now enter the region of demagogues and popular orators ; a desolate flat, over which the spirits are driven by an unceasing wind—My guide points out first Pericles, whose policy ruined Athens, then Cleon, the Roman Tribunes, the Gracchi, Marius, Cinna, and Rienzi—Modern demagogues follow—Warning to England against such leaders, and republican ideas imported from France or the United States—The ill consequences of Columbus's discoveries.

O FOOLISH cares of men ! O toilsome days  
Idly bestowed ! O labour run to waste,  
Success by failure crossed, and cancelled praise !  
As on loose ground a goodly temple based,  
Or mine where ore is none, deep-hewn in vain,  
Or sea-side footsteps by the tide erased ;  
Such is their guerdon who with hand and brain  
For self not others toil, though high the deed,  
With dross for gold repaid, and chaff for grain ;  
Empty the ears ; like harvest from like seed.  
They only self attain who self forgo,  
All lost well lost for love's sufficient meed.  
But worst for those who by the harlot show  
Of popular favour lured, and patriot's name,  
On the base crowd ingrate their toil bestow.  
And long must ages roll ere the pure flame

Of love those dregs consume, and the soiled ghost  
Pure through the gates return whence first it came.  
As Autumn flowers pinched by untimely frost  
Shrivelled and wan drop from their blighted stems  
Drenched with the night's cold dew, a death-stricken  
host,

So from the gay greenwood that circling hems  
The space to those great spirits assigned, who wait,  
Cleansed of earth's soil, love's faultless diadems,  
Forth as we passed with thoughtful steps sedate  
Changed all that cheerful scene to sombre hue  
That even remembered irks me to relate.

As mixed with sand and weed-rack pebbles strew  
Some torrent's path now dry, so was the ground,  
O'er which a bitter wind unceasing blew.

And here and there a stunted thorn had bound  
Its prickly network cross the path, and lay  
Light bones and broken shards the fields around.  
But there like ghosts that foiled of purpose stray

Yet may not rest or pause, dim forms of men  
Chasing or chased, so seemed, fled down the way :  
As flit the marsh-fires o'er the putrid fen

So went they, singly some, some trooped in bands  
Causeless, that sundered oft, then joined again.  
But rest or term was none ; thorn-strewn the sands

Denied repose ; and still the gusty wind  
Drove those weak forms along the desolate strands.  
And some lamenting went of friends unkind

And treacherous wrong ; and some like men distraught  
Ceaselessly called on others left behind.

And others veiled from their own selves in thought  
Silent were driven by sand and thorn ; but all  
Ever by that cold wind were forward raught.

As birds at random blown by the wild squall  
Precursor of the storm, now here now there  
Screaming are whirled by cottage roof and wall,

So showed those forms that through the dusty air  
Confused the sight : I stood, and wondering gazed  
If aught the untold meaning might declare.  
Then spoke my brother-guide ; " Why thus amazed  
Behold'st thou these ? or have new-visioned things  
So soon earth's records from thy mind erased ?  
They whom the popular breath on its light wings,  
Lighter themselves, to faction's heights upbore  
Here find what fitting meed such headship brings.  
Foremost his form <sup>1</sup> behold who first of yore  
Led the vain babblers when th' Athenian crowd  
Clutched at the helm, disdainful of the oar ;  
Till with riven mast, torn sail, and tangled shroud  
Helpless the vessel lay, and o'er her broke  
In whelming storm the Macedonian cloud.  
In freedom's borrowed name he bound the yoke  
Of popular will supreme on the fair land  
By Pallas cloven with th' olive-bearing stroke ; <sup>2</sup>  
And lit with vain self-trust the wasteful brand  
For thirty years <sup>3</sup> unquenched, till Graecia's pride,  
Ashes and blood, bestained the Thracian strand. <sup>4</sup>  
Close in his train the demagogue herd, allied  
In lust of gain or power, attend their chief,  
Cleon, and viler names to fame denied.  
All these as restless whirls the withered leaf  
Wind-driven across the road, are borne along .  
Till penal years outworn allow relief  
When renovated Greece from secular wrong  
Rescued by noble deeds resumes the wreath  
Of art, the wand of thought, the lyre of song,  
Then, nor till then, shall the due term bequeath

<sup>1</sup> Pericles.

<sup>2</sup> In the mythical contest between Poseidon and Pallas she called forth the olive in Athens.

<sup>3</sup> The Peloponnesian war.

<sup>4</sup> The battle at Arginusae.

" Their life to second birth, once more to tread  
Hymettus' slopes, Athenian air to breathe.  
So death resumes the living, life the dead,

Sunset revolves to sunrise, even to morn,  
Till the great noon its changeless radiance shed."  
Thus spoke my guide, nor more, whilst onward borne

By the rash wind those phantoms passed away,  
As shadow-waves pass o'er the breeze-swept corn.

Next fiercer sounds I heard, cries of dismay,

And plainings loud with curses mixed, that seemed  
To darken more the gloom of that sad day ;

Till swift of a new throng the vanguard gleamed

In double headship, while the following crew  
Like a mad comet's train confusedly streamed.

And a voice called aloud, " What guerdon due

To patriot-feigned sedition ? what reward  
For those who first rebellion's trumpet blew ? "

Deafened, alarmed, to my dear guide and lord

Closer I drew ; but he, " Behold the first  
Who dyed in Roman blood the Roman sword.

The Gracchi these, names to all time accursed ;

With them the progeny of their crime, the race

In base intrigue and poisonous treason versed ;

And wolfish Marius, and the dog-like face

Of shameless Cinna ; till Rome's violate State

Veiled in a despot's rule her worse disgrace.

And, following, the vain man,<sup>1</sup> the fool of fate,

Last of the Tribunes idly called, for he

Was but the bastard of a lesser date.

All these and many more in days to be,

Courtiers of popular headship, who for hire

To the mob idol bend a servile knee."

So forth the tumult swept, in mixed attire

Of various climes the witness, voices blent

In jarring resonance, sounds of plaint or ire ;

<sup>1</sup> Cola di Rienzi.

Orderless all, confused, dishonoured, went  
Wrecks of the turbid flood their art availed  
To loose, not bind, by their own triumph shent.<sup>1</sup>  
Those too who by brute force or fraud assailed  
Europe's ill-soldered thrones I saw, till last  
Weakness o'er weakness, dwarves o'er dwarves prevailed.  
So Bourbon's rotten stem to earth was cast ;  
So Spain's ill-nurtured seedlings on the coast  
Of far Atlantis<sup>2</sup> laid in lawless waste.  
O blight of earth's late harvest ! deadliest most  
Where fairest promise bloomed ! all honoured worth  
Fades at thy blast, in popular vileness lost.  
O England ! O my country ! thou whose birth  
To Greece, to Rome, a nobler sister gave,  
Empress of nations, crown of the whole earth,  
Treasure-house moated by the jealous wave,  
Thou that wave's mistress ; rivals at thy feet  
Now crouch in fear, now in vain envy rave ;  
Happy for thee if thy time-guarded seat  
From outer foes exempt, thou keep'st secure  
From Judas-patriots, and base faction's cheat.  
Too well thou know'st of old the brood impure  
Of democrat France, or that new-fangled world<sup>2</sup>  
Where chartered greed most flaunts her tawdry lure.  
Ill-starred the hour when Genoa's chief unfurled  
The Westward bellying canvass, better then  
By thwarting winds on rock and shipwreck hurled,  
Nor back returned a worse Pandora train  
To Europe's new Prometheus brought, with ills  
Unknown, unguessed, vexing the lives of men.  
Not she in scarlet robed on Latian hills,  
As Patmos' dreamer tells, a harlot queen,  
With worse draught her witchcraft's goblet fills.  
Drink they who list, and to the horde unclean

<sup>1</sup> Shamed.<sup>2</sup> America, North and South.



Unbar the gates of power, and 'mid the shrine  
Of worshipped worth enthrone a form obscene.  
Bestial themselves they boast a bestial line  
Fathered of apes, not men ; such madness waits  
Who earthly rule dissociate from divine.  
At this such glare as from the furnace gates  
Of Hiera<sup>1</sup> bursts or Aetna, when the night  
Unbinds the storm-fiend of Trinacria's<sup>2</sup> straits,  
So reddened skies and plain with angry light  
To th' unknown voice thus heard, whose threat'ning  
    sound  
In crimson fire transformed itself to sight ;  
Like aspens of the breeze-swept vale the ground  
Quivered beneath, the storm-wrapped heavens above ;  
Then stilled, as in new splendour closed around,  
Now near, th' all-healing wings of pardoning Love.

<sup>1</sup> One of the Lipari islands, north of Sicily.

<sup>2</sup> Sicily.

## CANTO XIX

We pass to a calm sea-shore, and see Hannibal—My guide tells him of my own early admiration for him—He welcomes us, and calls up his past life in a series of visions—His greatness survives the ruin of Carthage.

THE light unveiled, to which a tenfold sun  
Had seemed a fire-fly spark, the wind-drove band  
Of flitting ghosts, the tempest, all were gone ;  
And as in some wide bay the slanted sand  
Washed by the reflux tide no trace retain,<sup>1</sup>  
Void of all these before us lay the land.  
But with thick grass and reed o'ergrown the plain  
Circled the mountain base ; and far in view  
Spread the bare bosom of the heaving main..  
Still was the tempered air ; no storm-blast blew  
Thwart the clear vault, nor cloud nor speck was there,  
Blue canopy to the ocean's waveless blue.  
But 'twixt the meadowed slope and sandflats bare  
Rose a low wall, as where a drifting waste  
With near encroachment threatens an orchard square.  
By a smooth path the midmost way was crossed,  
Where as the Master led I followed slow,  
Silent, and in the realm of ghosts a ghost.

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* MSS.

Then was I ware of one with downcast brow  
Propped on his hand, who speechless sat and lone  
By the wall-side the narrow slope below.  
A warrior shape in burnished steel he shone  
But light the figured cuirass-guard, and light  
The plumeless helm, and light the baldric's zone.  
As the hot blackness of a sultry night  
Flickers with sheeted fire, uncertain gleamed  
In his dark eyes half-closed a dangerous light.  
Of southern climes and Libyan suns he seemed,  
Panther-like crouched, the path beside ; in rest  
Restless ; I knew not if he waked or dreamed.  
Like one who sees but marks not, though the guest  
Stand in the open door, nor sign nor word  
Of welcome gives, with inner thought oppressed,  
So to the greeting by our speech preferred  
No answer made that form, as who distraught  
From unknown lips some foreign sound has heard.  
Then, roused to speech : " By what new ordinance  
brought  
Passed ye the circling bounds ? and, if the way  
Self-taught ye know, why else enquire ye aught ? "  
To whom my guide ; " That which all worlds obey  
Or thine, or ours, or other, bid me change  
For your brief twilight life's eternal day.  
But he thou seest companion of my range  
Is one whom from thy being, close linked with mine,  
Nor sundering space nor time could all divide.  
As the slant reflex of the ocean brine  
Presents in nearness on the mirrored rim  
Some distant star, so history's oft-conned line  
Thee first, Hamilcar's son, revealed to him  
In worshipped likeness ; to his eyes thy rays  
Shone in full orb, where faint all else and dim."  
Not from a rain-dark cloud more dazzling blaze  
Declares the sun's return, than at the word

Transfigured beamed the pride of Byrsa's<sup>1</sup> days,  
And cried ; " O welcome thou, my strength, my lord !

O happy hour ! O long deferred embrace  
Of spirit with spirit, death sundered, life restored !"  
Then thus to me ; " Of distant land and race,

Yet near in higher kin, brother, to thee  
Be given a brother's welcome, face to face.  
No common chance, no vulgar destiny

Assigned thy hither-ward way, not hence to part  
Till plucked the fruit from truth's slow-ripening tree.  
The spell in by-gone days o'er mind and heart

Cast by my name I thus renew : the dead  
For thee revive, for thee re-act their part."

Even as he spoke, thick gathered round my head

A mist that hid the landscape round, and then  
Parted to visioned scenes that came or sped.  
And first a shrine I saw, with panoplied men

Close thronged, and 'midst a child : his hand was laid  
As on an altar's marge : I looked again  
And knew the face, and heard the words he said

Of hatred to his country's foes : the vow  
Long years in blood fulfilled, in blood repaid.  
Crimson the fire-light gleamed on cheek and brow,

But star-like pure the childish eyes ; their glance  
Summed the sworn future in an absolute Now.

This soon was gone ; and widened on my trance

A desolate height, where o'er the incrusted ice  
Ghost-like the snow-wreaths whirled their dizzying dance.  
And a long train, various in war's device,

Slow-winding clomb the slope, with bleeding feet  
Upcrowding to the barriered precipice.  
Each on his comrade gazed, aghast to meet

That face, the glass of his own thought, till fear  
Grew to despair, ill-counsellor of retreat.  
Then rose that Leader's voice in accents clear,

<sup>1</sup> Carthage.

And, "Forward" cried ; "across these heights is Rome,  
Rival and spoil : " nor more was then to hear  
For splintering rocks and crash of arms, while clomb

The dusky war-files to the crest, as pass  
Dark lines of tempest thwart tossed ocean's foam.  
Next a wide plain, dark-grown with tufted grass,

Spread to my view, where lost in reedy sedge  
Half-hidden waters fed the black morass.  
But red to sight was by each swampy ledge

The trampled ooze, and ruddy streamlets flowed  
Through field and mud-bank to th' horizon's edge.  
Upwards I looked, if chance the sunset glowed

In western heavens diffused with crimson stain  
That in reflex such ghastly semblance showed.  
But grey the silent eve, with autumn rain

Dim-streaked in slanting bars, and faint the day  
Narrowed in colourless close o'er stream and plain :  
And grass and reeds amidst in splashes lay

The blood of slaughtered men : with curdling blood  
Mantled the sluggish pools, the shallow bay.  
There, girt with death and conquest, midmost stood

He, the dread Chief, who late from Alpine snow  
Poured, at his vow's behest, war's pityless flood.  
Thrice victor now, by Trebia's torrent flow

And Thrasimene's banks, till Cannae's field  
Heaped up the slaughter-pyre of that great vow,  
When shivered was Rome's sword, and cloven her shield

With deadliest-seeming blows, and even the war,  
A harvest reaped, no further sheaves might yield.  
There stayed the forward tide, there Libya's star

Faded, and from the o'er-confident leader fled  
Neglected Victory's unreturning car.

Again I looked : Numantia's sands were red

With her own children's gore, and, gorged his fill,  
On Libyan flesh the Libyan vulture fed.

Vain now th' impetuous onset, vain the skill

Taught by long use, the stubborn courage vain ;  
Fixed the decree, remediless the ill.  
But he, the lion of Afric's fervid plain,  
Whom chance nor death could daunt not, nor the  
might  
Of fate subdue, nor fortune bind in chain,  
Though set, hopeless of morn, in Zama's night  
That sun, for twenty years with victory's ray  
Made one, untired resumed his country's fight.  
By wise restraint and toil that brooks delay  
Rebuilding Byrsa's ruins, with slow reform  
Her prostrate walls upraising day by day.  
Vain hope, vain labour all : the Roman storm  
That snapped the central stem, relentless yet  
Swept on, nor gave to rise the prostrate form.  
Withered in earth the root, the branches wet  
With poisonous dews that kill ; Phœnicia's place  
Knew it no more, past memory, past regret.  
Yet he like some lone watch-tower round whose base  
All night the eddying waters clash, till day  
Nought but expanse unbroken now displays,  
So stood Numidia's chief, then passed away  
In darkness from the land unworthy grown  
Of such as he, left to her own decay.  
In foreign lands to childhood's thought unknown,  
Where native accents none to soothe the ear  
Nor native sights the eye, banished, alone ;  
By an ungrateful country's cruel fear  
Driven forth, he sits an Asian Despot's guest  
'Mid dim neglect, and base barbarian sneer.  
Nor triumph now nor fame, but only rest  
He seeks, yet finds not, though the sundering clime  
Had baffled all but Rome's relentless quest.  
He knew, nor vainly strove, but calm to time  
Bequeathed th' imperfect vow, the vengeance slow  
That on a nation wreaks a nation's crime.

"Here be the end ; the gods have willed it so ;

To them not Rome I yield ; my task is o'er ;

And a great Shade to the great Shades I go."

He spoke, and quaffed ; the footsteps at the door

Close on the threshold paused ; not this they sought,

Feared in his life, in death they feared him more.

Then as the passing of a dreamer's thought

By some sharp sound dispelled, this vision too

Passed, but remained the truth by shadows taught.

In Byrsa's port no more the seaman crew

Unload their merchant bales, no more its sands

Shall high-towered empire on those mounds renew.

Faded the very memory from the lands

Made by that memory famous, now the prey

Of Arab hordes and Gallia's meaner bands.

But thou, great Spirit, in truth's eternal day

Eterne, hast reared thy glory's monument

From earth's dishonour safe, from time's decay.

Lord of the high resolve, the stern intent

That life and self disdains ; lord of the throne

Starlike amid the starry element.

One be my lot with thine, one mantle thrown

Round us in earth's dim ways, one sphere above ;

That sphere where reigns in all, yet reigns alone

One common Lord, one Guide, one Trust, one Love.

## CANTO XX

The Second Region : Fine Art ; approached by a gateway over which appears the mystic Flower, before seen—We enter the region of Architects—Vision of Egypt and her great monuments, and of the first Architect, who was Builder of the Palace at Thebes.

SEVEN voices from the cloud-veiled summit call,  
Seven paths, to each a guide, lead up the slope,  
Seven portals welcome to the mystic hall ;  
Hopeful each voice, each entry scrolled with hope,  
With hope each pathway bordered ; blank and mute.  
Is the eighth access to the ultimate cope ;  
But this I saw not yet nor knew ; my foot

Now trod the second path that Eastward still  
Wound 'twixt the ocean shore and mountain root.  
For now the lustral realm where the first ill

Works its own cure, and loftiest aims attain  
The prize oft sought by failure, as the rill  
Long vexed in mazes finds at last the main,

Behind us lay ; nor till th' appointed time  
Of earth fulfilled, might I those heights regain.  
O welcome hour, expected long, the chime

Of destiny's peal, that bids th' earth-weary ghost  
Change for unsullied light this fog-girt slime !  
As one who wind-bound long from some fair coast



Loosens the sail, half glad new scenes to try,  
Half grieving o'er dear things in distance lost,  
Even so, distraught 'twixt pain and joy was I ;

Joy to behold the further realms, and pain  
From those great spirits to sunder company.  
But fate compelled me, and th' invisible chain

From birth to death twined round our ways, each  
one

Drew my steps onward from their rest again.  
The kinsman form of Byrsa's lonely son,

The wind-blown patriot troop, the statesman band,  
The laurelled lords of conquest, all were gone.  
By the wet margin of the shingly strand

We passed, a silent pair ; the sea's bright glass  
Glittered to right, and left-ward was the land.  
And now two little hills with wavy grass

Green from their lowest base before us stood,  
Narrowing the pathway to a middle pass.  
On either summit high a clustered wood

Of laurel, mixed with growth of various leaf  
Intricate, made a forest solitude,  
Where never curious foot of man, the thief

Of Nature's stores and treasured loveliness  
Might come, nor laughter coarse, nor plaining grief.  
But some coy Oread<sup>1</sup> scaped the rude caress

Of all too eager Hermes, here might dwell,  
And tend her flowers, and weave her fragrant tress.  
There a fair gateway spanned the narrow dell

With its white arch of chiselled marble, wrought  
To shapes in beauty indescribable ;  
No lovelier shows by visitant angels brought

To the young priestess, when within the fane  
Alone she worships, earth and self forgot.  
And living sparklets like the sprinkled rain

Of sunrise, a thin veil of atom light,

<sup>1</sup> Mountain Nymph.

Flashed through those shapes, and passed, and flashed again.

But o'er and through the gateway's midmost height

A flower, in form and hue all flowers of earth

Excelling, downward bent, a wondrous sight.

No terraced bowers adorned for moonlight mirth

Had reared that flower by Belus' palaces,

Nor from Hesperian orchard-glades its birth.

But other suns and other dews than these,

The suns that set not, and the dews of May

Eternal, fed its living loveliness.

I looked and knew the charm that on my way

Up the dark gorge 'twixt dream and waking lost

Cast the strange magic of its Iris ray ;

The same, but lovelier now ; more bright the boast

Of changeful hues, statelier the wooing grace,

Then most intent when careless seeming most.

Balanced in air, as then, with downward face

My face it sought ; and soft its scented breath

Drew me, as draws the lamp the insect's chase.

And now we stood the portal arch beneath,

Leader and led, where round the mystic flower

Clustered in emulous twine the marble wreath.

Then round us swept, but whence unknown, a power

Like a strong wave that lifts from off the sand

The bather's foot-hold in a dangerous hour ;

Nor aught I saw, but felt the clasping hand

Of my true guide on mine, and heard the voice

That first spoke welcome to the spirit land.

And these the words, " Brother and friend, rejoice ;

The realm of those who Nature, cast by man

In flawless mould, have made their earthly choice,

Now open lies before thee ; rise and scan

What of the work abides by each in place

Accomplished, how fulfilled the god-like plan."

He said ; and at his voice, as 'neath the trace

Of some skilled artist on the canvass bare  
Comes out from mind to sense the pictured face,  
So from the blankness of encircling air

A landscape clear in outline, steeped in light  
Came forth, till seemed the thing itself was there.  
For a broad river rolled its tawny might

'Twixt fields and rocks alternate ; pillared fanes  
Bordered the gliding highway left and right.  
Beneath a changeless sky of clouds and rains

Unknowing, rose high walls, that seemed upreared  
By recent hands, so free from rent or stain :<sup>1</sup>  
And giant statues of old kings revered

By crouching slaves around their pedestals,  
And records graven of cancelled days appeared.  
And they, the pyramid twins, whose bulk appals

The gazer, till recoil both mind and eye  
Back from th' incline of those heaven-piercing walls,  
And these beyond, where th' ever-glowing sky

Canopies o'er the giant maze of stone  
Where the first Egypt throned in majesty.

Gone now the courtier crowd, the armies gone

That thronged those halls, and gone the builder kings  
Who reared them, gone their names, their deeds, their  
throne :

But 'mid the memories of those faded things

Unfading stands the palace monument,  
Titanic birth of huge imaginings.

The lotus-flowering column ; sculptures blent

Of bird and beast and man ; the quaint design  
Of multiple form with rainbow tints besprent ;  
The pointed spires, whose granite mirrors shine

Like crystal dykes in the sun ; the porches' shade  
Dark as the entry of some caverned mine.

Wondering, all these I passed amid, nor stayed

Till reached the Memnon brother-shapes, that sit

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* MSS.

Guarding the vale where their dead selves are laid :  
Now reft of voice, yet more in silence fit

To sentinel silent death, where buried lies  
An empire's dust, apportioned to the pit.

Nor the sole guardians they ; with woman-eyes

Earnest, and lips half-parted, watches ever  
The Theban mystery,<sup>1</sup> couched in lion guise.

And there, 'twixt those great statues and the river,

Bare to the waist a dusky form up-grew  
Where the hot air-streams o'er the sandhills quiver.  
A scroll his knees up-bore ; but fixed his view

Rested on the great shafts of Karnak's pile  
As one who from old time their purport knew.

Serious his aspect ; yet a patient smile

Parted his lips, and bright his steadfast eye  
Shone to the mirror of the flashing hill.

Of us no heed he took, nor moved, till nigh

Approaching spoke my guide ; " O thou, whose art  
Creative, forecast of eternity,

First to the inmost thought of Nature's heart

Gave form and substance ; till with joy she saw  
Through thee revealed to man her nobler part,  
And the hid life from sight by uniform law

Dark-veiled, through thee discovered clear and given  
To form, its own incorporate presence saw ;

By thee of mortals first the screen was riven

That beauty's truth from man concealed, and earth  
By thee transformed was sister made to heaven.

Father of art ! from thee the Pallas birth

Burst in the fullness of the powers above  
Goddess and queen ; yet in her queenliest worth  
Vassal and handmaid to th' archetypal Love."

<sup>1</sup> The Sphinx.

## CANTO XXI

The range of Architecture—Vision of the Palaces and Temples of Thebes in their original splendour—Greatness of Egypt—Vision of the land, past and present—The Three Lamps of Architecture: Beauty, Strength, Truth—The Architect recounts the rise and progress of the Art; in Greece and the Empire from Britain to Africa, and throughout Europe—I lament its present non-existence; he answers that the Art is now lost.

LIKE one who home from far returned to trace  
Ancestral memories, finds in hall or shrine  
Graven the rude likeness of some kinsman face,  
And seeing thinks, "And was this semblance thine,  
First of my race? the features these? the frame  
This? through long-herited birthright moulding mine."  
So gazed I on that man to storied fame  
Unknown, yet of such record worthier far  
Than many a sworded, many a sceptred name.  
They rear, they ruin, they make, they mend, they mar,  
But slight their crumbling work and narrow, pent  
'Mid close-drawn bounds of time, and regioned bar.  
Stars of the night, to each his hour is lent;  
Then the dark marge: but thine the lamp of dawn  
Firstborn and herald of day's firmament;  
From where Ilyssus threads the thymy lawn

To Tiber's yellow waves, and the far lands  
'Neath cold Arcturus' sluggish wheels withdrawn.  
Then mind to mind made answer ; hands with hands

Linked through the ages wrought, and heart to heart  
Spoke what who hears obeys, not understands.  
But he, that primal spirit, from these apart

In his first greatness dwells, a nameless king  
Of the hid depths where Nature links with Art.  
Then as to wakening eyes, brushed by the wing

Of sleep too sudden scared, in form and hue  
Tremulous awhile welters each new-seen thing,  
So gradual on my sight the vision grew,

Confused at first, till gathering outlines wrought  
What seemed a kingly palace reared in view.  
Ruddy the stone from sad Syene brought

Gleamed to the sun ; within, each chamber wall  
Was bright with countless shapes of pictured thought  
Beyond the pillared ranges of the hall

Sat one, the warrior king, whose sculptured sneer  
On Syrian rocks yet flouts the vanquished thrall.<sup>1</sup>  
Without were horse and chariot, sword and spear

The living might of Egypt, on their lord  
Intent ; his smile their hope, his frown their fear  
No lure of merchant gain great Egypt's sword

Unsheathed, no phantom vain of despot mood  
Nor fitful crowd, nor faction's hasty word.  
But in the mirror of her fountless flood

In yearly change unchanged, from ebb to flow  
Imaged her own eternity she viewed.

Land of the mountain cairns stone-piled, that show

Life deathless made through death ; hers the vast maze  
Where Moeris'<sup>2</sup> prisoned waters coil and flow.

<sup>1</sup> Sesostris of Egypt, said to have conquered Syria, and set up there inscriptions and emblems denoting his victory over effeminate races.

<sup>2</sup> A lake near Memphis.

And where on Phylae's roofs th' unslanted rays  
Of heaven's sign-guided chariot, downward poured  
Year after year renew their shadowless blaze ;  
To where 'mid clustered palm and granaries stored

Wind the seven rivers of the guarded plain  
From towered Canopus to the Syrian ford.  
But on the granite floor of that wide fane

Lay slumbrous forms of sages, warriors, kings,  
Thick-strewn as corn beat down by summer rain.  
And all around piled heaps of shattered things,

Dead emblems of dead mysteries there I knew,  
Fragments of orbs, and crowns, and arms, and wings.  
Intent in thought I stood, till on my view

Again arose his shape who first the dream  
Of artist-thought to tangible being drew.  
Before the inmost shrine where the hid stream

Of life wells ceaseless up he stood, and high  
Three star-like cressets o'er him cast their gleam.  
Blent, yet distinct they shone ; the dazzled eye

Now one, now three, made reckoning ; so the light  
Wove of three hues one singular brilliancy.  
Pure the first lamp of silver radiance bright

Perfect in beauty shone ; not fairer shines  
Full-orbed heaven's queen in summer's calmest night.  
The next with ruddier fire than decks the lines

Of Hesper's cloud-built palace glowed ; its ray  
Told of a power that wanes not nor declines.  
Clear sapphire shone the third ; the azure day

That vaults the frozen mountain-tops at noon  
Compared with this were blotted mist and grey.  
Three, yet a single fire the cressets shone,

As though a rain-bow should its banded chain  
Of separate tints retwisting blend in one.

Now diamond white, now red with ruby stain,

Now hyaline all the temple glowed ; and now  
Hueless that light that could each hue contain.

Full fell the triple splendour on the brow

Of that true priest, art's firstborn, heir, and sire,  
As on Imaian<sup>1</sup> heights the sunrise glow.

Then towards my guide, who to that triple fire

His added radiance lent, he turned, and spoke  
Words as of him who holds his heart's desire.

"On the dim earth in me the dawning broke,

Dawn not of earth nor of earth's heaven, outspread  
Beyond the clustered stars and zodiac yoke.

Thee too, my lesser friend, I welcome, led

By him of both the lord, till the high goal

• Is reached 'mid those who live, misnamed the dead.

Sown is the seed that to earth's farthest pole

Shall reach, a mighty tree, whose branching pride  
Of various flowers entwines one perfect whole.

Truth, beauty, strength ;—of these the power allied

That substance clothes on thought, and gives to man  
Of Nature's wealth what Nature's self denied.

Here is their fount ; from hence Art's rivers ran

Where 'mid the plain in Asian story famed

Ninus and Nimrod reared their giant plan ;

Mighty, but all fantastic show, till tamed

By Dorian cunning to the perfect grace

Of the great shrine from Virgin Wisdom named.<sup>2</sup>

Then Westward rolled the stream, in breadth and  
space

Widening, as widened from the seven-fold hill

Rome's Empire, circling to a world's embrace ;

From Britain's twilight halls and cloisters, till

Afric's once populous coast-fringe, where the wave  
Broke on long wharf and palace-crested hill.

Or where Byzantium's sky-lit dome,<sup>3</sup> that gave

Judaea's fane, the boast of David's son,

A more than rival, vaults an empire's grave.

<sup>1</sup> Himalayan.

<sup>2</sup> The Parthenon, dedicated to Pallas.

<sup>3</sup> S. Sophia.



" Or where the lion-standards flaunt the sun  
Reddened on Adria's shoals, and dome and tower  
Rise like a faery mist from waters dun ;<sup>1</sup>

Or where in sculptured grace the queenly flower,  
Thy lily, France, emblazoned arch and wall  
By many-pillared aisle, or buttressed tower.  
Palaces, temples, tombs, memorials, all

Vaunts of a world whose dying children fain  
From deathless thought would weave their marble pall ;  
Stone, but instinct with life ; the builder's brain

Was the true mirror where the triplicate ray  
Of strength, truth, beauty flashed to form again.  
Theirs the firm life that shall not pass away

When names and kingdoms pass ; known or unknown  
From me, their common dawn, kindled their day."  
He ceased ; and I with thought perplexed, as one

Who listening, part accordant finds, and part  
Not as he deemed, to question thus begun ;  
Saying, " If from th' eternal fount thy art

Was drawn, that to mere toil of structured stone  
Beauty, and truth, and strength could thus impart,  
Why now from earth withdrawn the power, that none

Can substance give to art's true thought ? or build  
Aught that may face unshamed the common sun ?  
Tame copyists all, to forge the likeness skilled,

Not to create ; their work a scroll bereft  
Of charactered worth, a promise unfulfilled.  
Nor power, nor truth, nor grace, nor beauty left,

But mere reflex and semblance ; barren death  
Clothed with false tracement of life's borrowed west ? "  
" Even so," that shape replied ; " not twice the breath

Of heaven is breathed in man ; not twice the Spring  
Garlands the year, not twice the Summer's wreath.  
They come, they pass ; another year may bring  
Fresh flowers, but not the same ; the magic word

<sup>1</sup> Venice.

“Forgot; lost in the depths the master ring.  
Vanished the polestar from heaven’s chart, unheard  
Amphion’s builder strain; the delicate sheen  
Once wove o’er earth’s dull things stripped off and  
blurred.

Blighted the boughs reclothe<sup>1</sup> no second green;  
The starless nights roll on, and bring no dawn;  
Faded the lines from the many-diapered screen;  
Till on another world another dawn<sup>2</sup>

Shall rise, and fresh from withered leaves’ decay  
Blooms a fair flower, an infant world new-born,  
From morn to eve accomplishing its day;

So to their goal the onward ages move.  
Till then death rules and spares not; to her sway  
All things are subject but undying Love.”

<sup>1</sup> *Resume* altered to *reclothe*, but the syntax uncorrected.

<sup>2</sup> *Sic* MSS.

## CANTO XXII

My guide consoles me, and conducts to the Region of Painting—  
The Nile valley is replaced by the Val d'Arno—The Palace of  
Painting and its Gallery of works of all times—Pagan myth-  
ology, Classical subjects, Biblical and Christian, History,  
Landscape—A summary of all Art—My guide explains the  
excellence of Painting, especially the Italian Schools.

THE voice that by Siloah's gates at even  
O'erdarkening gloom with gloom, to Israel told  
Captive the ark, the standard soiled and riven,  
Stabbed with no deadlier wound the pontiff old,  
Than me his utterance who earth's bloom foretaught  
Fated to dust, its fires to ashes cold.  
Inly I mourned, "In vain the gift was brought  
Mockery of dying men, so soon withdrawn  
A cancelled boon, now all, now less than nought."  
"Grieve not," then thus my guide, "the brightest  
morn  
Is child of darkest night; the destined Spring  
Bides hopeful 'neath snow-sheeted Winter's lawn.  
Now lift thy eyes to yon fair plain, where fling  
High walls and towers an outlined shade, that tells  
Of strength with beauty linked in golden ring,  
By liliated fields, and violet-cushioned dells  
And slopes with olive hoar, where Arno's stream

"Unlearns the chill of Falterona's wells.<sup>1</sup>

There with the memories girt of beauty's dream

The lords of beauty dwell, by just award  
Robed in the brightness of love's artist gleam."

Like one who drowsy grown the wayside sward

A half-hour's couch has made, then starting knows  
Far off the journey's bourne, nor brooks retard,  
But nerves his stiffened limbs, and knits his brows,

Then to his way once more with quickened pace  
Turns, nor to backward scenes a thought allows ;  
So from the visioned Nile of primal days,

Temples, and tombs, and marvels, to the abode  
Of beauty wed with art I turned my ways.

Sun-gilded shone the grass, and white the road

By orchard-grove and portal fair, and white  
Beneath our feet the marble pavement showed.

So on we passed till where in princely height

Tall marble walls, where niche or window none,  
Closed in their jealous ward from outer sight.

Four-square within the cloistered silence, won

By a low-entranced door ; and all around  
Arch upon arch kept out the baffled sun.

With lilies white and red th' ingirdled ground

A flowery tapestry shone ; the gallery tall  
Was with close fret of liliated garden crowned.

Nor several rooms were there, nor portioned hall,

But a continuous interchange of hue  
In pictured beauty ran from wall to wall.

Whate'er of ancient dreams or fancies new

Man's thought has imaged forth or hand designed  
Was present there as in true life to view ;

Angels, and saints, and godheads ; forms assigned

To visioned spheres of faith's eternity ;

<sup>1</sup> Dante describes the Arno (*Purg.* xiv. 16) as

Un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona—

"one of the highest of the Tuscan Apennines" (Dean Plumptre, *Commedia*, 1886).

Thought's bubbles, blown by hope with love combined.  
These all, fair as bright cloudlets scattered high

O'er earliest summer morn, nor less than they  
Fading to day's hot radiance, witched the eye.  
They too, presentments of an earlier day

When shrined in stars, or founts, or branching trees,  
Faith's gods or god-like powers made glad the way,  
Sylvans and Oreads named, and Dryades,

And Jove, and Phoebus, and the presence fair  
Of nymphs or Muses, lustrous images,  
First-fruits of earth's first flowers, were figured there

Like tangled threads of light in changeful rays  
From sun-lit pools cast on a marble stair.

Beauties unreal, yet real ; fathomless maze

Of error-pictured truth ; ill-bartered dreams  
For waking blank of over-reasoning days.

And heroes here and gods, by Simois' stream

And Ida's pine-clad heights, or loftier snows  
Of dread Olympus, Hellas' minstrel theme.

Nor less in imaged life those walls disclose

Th' all-wondrous pageant age by age unrolled  
From earth's first shapement to its fiery close,  
Fable, or truth ; and Eden's pendulous gold,

The whelming seas, and where the shepherd sage  
Saw the great sight by Midian's hill-girt fold ;  
Till broke the snare, and loosed the fowler's cage

By th' Erythraean shore and parted brine,  
Portal and proem of a God-ruled age ;  
And the dread Mount, and Horeb's tempest shrine

In fire and darkness veiled, were pictured there,  
And round the mountain base the warning line.  
But these I passed, till shone in sequence fair

Crowned with the light nor change nor time can quell  
Earth's loveliest Vision, sole beyond compare,  
The Mother-Maid, th' Immaculate Miracle,

In perfect beauty throned ; and next her One

Whose look was power, whose every word a spell,  
A brightness robed in brightness, as the sun

Clad in a golden cloud ; o'er shame and pain  
Anguish and death He passed triumphant on.  
And they his legioned followers, the long train

Of maids and matrons, manhood, age, and youth,  
Came after, of that beauty rapt and fain.

And other sights were there, dread deeds of ruth

In war or tumult done, and bitter woes,  
Faces with hate distort, and deeds uncouth ;  
And there were happy meadows ; ordered rows

Of purple-clustered vines ; with fruit the trees  
O'erweighted, margined round each garden close ;  
Peace was the sunshine, peace the tepid breeze

That scarce disturbed the curl which lightest lay  
On the stray maiden's neck ; a world of peace ;  
And the green hills whence all the live-long day

Full-fed the summer rivulets sought the plain,  
Stretched down to smooth sea-marge and shining bay.  
There too smoke-pennoned peaks, and fiery rain

On blackened slopes, and icy crests of stone  
Inviolate, that the eagle's wing disdain ;  
All that earth joys or fears from zone to zone,

All that earth's sons have suffered, been, or wrought,  
All that earth's spirit-powers have woven in one,  
These, and more else, from substance shaped by thought

To semblance more than substance true, were there  
From farthest bounds together blent and brought.  
As burns a magic fire in noontide air

Fed with rare gums, in many-coloured light  
A living prism, so glowed each painted square.  
Vision of visions ! to my thrice-happy sight

Made plain in absolute beauty, form and limb,  
Colour and shade, all fashioned to delight.  
With beauty's wine upfilled from depth to brim

Was my heart's cup ; for beauty's happiness

With tears of joy's excess my eyes were dim.  
Nor conscious thought could now nor word express  
The bliss through mind and sense diffused, as dwells  
Liquid in crystal globes pure light's excess.  
Bound and o'er-mastered by th' entangling spells  
I gazed, confused as he who waking hears  
Round him the mingled chime of countless bells.  
Then spoke my guide ; " This shrine the sequent years,  
Mirror of human life, in tints distilled  
From human hearts, tempered with human tears,  
With men's great deeds, great hopes, great woes have  
filled,  
Till summed the perfect count by measured days  
Determined, closed the book, the vision sealed.  
Here dwell the royal spirits, whose view sublime  
Ranged all earth's daedal scene, whose guided hand  
Wrought in the might of life's creative prime.  
They chiefest whom the loved Hesperian<sup>1</sup> land  
Canopied o'er by heaven's best influence, fed  
From breasts ambrosial, her own children band.  
Theirs the great plain in chequered green outspread  
From Alp to Adria ; theirs the vineclad home  
Tuscan or Umbrian, and the nameless Head<sup>2</sup>  
That a world's headship owned, and named it Rome.  
Nor absent they, though few, from colder skies  
Gathered with these in Art's encircling dome.  
All these abide thy question, to thy eyes  
Manifest in their works ; so rules the star  
That on thy twilight bid such morn arise.  
Enter ; the veil is raised, withdrawn the bar,  
Decked the high hall, full flowered the mystic grove ;  
Enter, an hour made one with those who are  
Mirrors and mirrored in all-beauteous Love."

<sup>1</sup> Italy.

<sup>2</sup> The original name of Rome was regarded as a hidden mystery.

## CANTO XXIII

I traverse the gallery—Vision of Giotto found by Cimabue—The  
Tuscan School appears in procession from Masaccio to  
Michelangelo.

With flagging sails, that to th' uncertain breeze

Scarce make response, the bark to calm resigned  
Sleeps in the shadow of lake-margined trees ;

Then quivering wakes, if so some brisker wind

Ruffles the darkened wave, and forward borne  
Leaves the low shore and tethering stakes behind.

So at his word who from my being's morn

To fading eve had made my ways his care

Starting I roused me, with desire new born

More to behold ; with earnest eyes the square,

Now bathed, so seemed, in noontide blaze, and  
glowing

With thousand hues, I questioned everywhere.

Like sunlit streams in liquid rainbows flowing

Glittered the galleried ranges, and between  
From pier to pier, thin-tendrilled flowers up-growing  
Waved in heaven's purest airs, a flickering screen ;

But lone the place, nor down the cloistered shade  
Was living form, nor on the central green.

Onward we went with measured steps, nor stayed



To separate wonder where the imaged skill  
Scene after scene, form following form displayed.  
I would have questioned oft my guide ; but still  
With steadfast face intent on things before  
From range to range he passed, nor stayed my will.  
Then as a spring-tide mist with curtain hoar

Mantles some willowed dell, a vapour rolled  
In upward wreaths curled through the palace floor,  
Till sense and thought, wrapped in that heavy fold,

Awhile were blurred, as blurred a seal that shows  
With second impress crossed th' unhardened mould.  
Thus while I stood perplexed, before me rose

Green slopes with pasture glad, and scattered sheep,  
White as on April hills the remnant snows.

'Mid flowers of those that greet the morn, and steep  
Their dyes in its pure beams, the slanted dales  
Clomb from the valley to the crowning steep.

"Arno's mid course thou seest, of Tuscan vales,

And all are fair, the fairest, by the walls  
Where blooms the garden of a hundred tales.<sup>1</sup>

Even there," thus spoke my guide, "the sunlight falls

On him the shepherd lad, the pride and crown  
Of Florence most, and Padua's cloistered walls."

I looked ; a boy beside, in braided gown

Stooped a thin form, as on the risen sun  
A waning moon in earliest morn looks down.

"Through many orbs the changeful ages run,"

Added my guide ; "but heaven's last gift, the art  
That colour weds to shape, in him begun.

Giotto thou seest, like him of God's own heart

Chosen from the sheepfold, 'mid the monarch few  
Who faithful found in either world have part.

Happy the hour that forth his footsteps drew

Who found the field-hid treasure ; happier thou,  
Thyself the priceless pearl revealed to view."

<sup>1</sup> The Poggio Gherardi, near Florence, where the *Decamerone* opens.

While thus he spoke, the elder Shade his brow

With gracious semblance raised, and said, "Behold  
What to this hour succeeding years allow.

Linked with his name my name ; the glories told

Shall blend with his my praise, but his the more,  
Leader and pasturer of the Tuscan fold."

With that he pointed where in vapour hoar

Updrawn from Arno's stream the city lay,

Cherished of Mars, but of Dione<sup>1</sup> more.

There without peer, as for some festal day

Rises her handmaids 'midst a maiden queen,

Uprose the virginal tower,<sup>2</sup> art's Iris ray.

And marshalled from the opening gates were seen

In long procession stateliest forms, that moved

Crowned with red lilies woven with fadeless green.

And, "There are they by Love himself beloved,"

Thus spoke my guide, "whose work through toilful pain

Truth guided, thought perfected, time approved."

Then was I ware, circling that faultless fane,

Of countless shapes, all various, as in dreams

Pictured successive on a slumberer's brain.

And some were lovelier than the fabled themes

Of old Peneus' banks or Tempe's shades ;

And some like spectres bred from Stygian streams.

But fewer these, nor much to sight displayed

'Mid those bright shapes thick as at evening close

The living lamps<sup>3</sup> that throng some Indian glade.

White lilies strewed their path, like new-fallen snows

On Pratomagno<sup>4</sup> at morn ; and round them gleamed

Full-orbed the light earth dims not nor bestows.

As one who doubts if very fact, or dreamed

Long since what now he wakeful sees, I gazed

<sup>1</sup> *Dione*, mother to Aphrodite (*Iliad*, v. 370).

<sup>2</sup> Giotto's Tower, faced with coloured marbles. <sup>3</sup> Fire-flies.

<sup>4</sup> *Pratomagno*, part of the Apennine ridge in upper Val d'Arno  
(*Purg.* v. 116).

On one whose features not unknown I deemed.  
But he with answering look his eyes upraised,

And said, "Thy thought I know; long since we met  
In days not all from memory's page erased.  
Spirit with spirit, mind with mind, ere yet

To utterance framed thy young desires, new born  
That hour to life<sup>1</sup>; thou can'st not sure forget,  
Hour when Masaccio's name, as on the dawn

The day-star risen, cast on thy heart the ray  
Lightening the true to prize, the false to scorn.  
My followers these, in whom Hesperia's day

Even to fulfilment's noon upgathered, shone  
Art's zodiac belt, bright clasp of life's array.  
Thou knewest not then, but now thou know'st, and known

Art by thy kinsfolk; look, nor lose the hour  
That past returns not with returning sun.

He<sup>2</sup> who next me thou seest, the stainless flower

From her received, to whom high heaven assigned  
A God for son, a riven heart for dower.

They too whose leaf smit by the parching wind

In tempest days breathed from the coming ill  
Withered, but left a life-fraught seed behind,  
Sandro,<sup>3</sup> and Della Porta,<sup>3</sup> and the skill

Of Ghirlandaio, master known of him<sup>4</sup>  
On either summit throned of Phocia's hill."<sup>5</sup>

He ceased, and onward past; to memory's brim

My soul was filled; with inmost longings yearned  
My heart, with happy tears my eyes were dim.  
Aroused I cleared my view, and next discerned

Those at whose master spell the golden years  
Of the young earth to the first spring returned.

<sup>1</sup> The writer first visited Florence as a child of thirteen.

<sup>2</sup> Angelico da Fiesole.

<sup>3</sup> Botticelli and Fra Bartolommeo (but the author seems to have meant L. Signorelli).

<sup>4</sup> Michelangelo, poet and painter.

<sup>5</sup> Parnassus.

Last in the train but loftiest, three ; their peers  
 Out-towering, as the lesser Alps among  
 The snow-named Mount its triple crest uprears.  
 Awhile their steps they stayed, as whom the throng  
 Loitering, or converse brief, awhile detain,  
 Where with my guide I stood their path along.  
 Not lowlier bends, bowed down by Autumn rain  
 The garden's latest flower, than I my head  
 Abashed to earth declined, nor raised again,  
 Till by the voice made bold of him who led  
 Into all truth my steps, with lifted eyes  
 Clear I beheld what erst my vision fled.  
 But they like the great stars of midnight skies  
 Watchful of all, yet heedless seemed, nor aught  
 Of earthly care might to their heights arise.  
 Made lean by studious labour and deep thought  
 Was One,<sup>1</sup> with eager eyes that restless gleamed  
 Ever to find, yet ever further sought.  
 And One,<sup>2</sup> a Titan shape, by lightning seamed  
 Yet of the lightning lord, Climene's son<sup>3</sup>  
 Victor, unbound, fire-bearing, such he seemed.  
 A dew-washed rose, just opening to the sun,  
 A star new-risen in the pale Eastern screen,  
 A breasted swan, where waters purest run,  
 Are fair ; but fairer He<sup>4</sup> the third was seen  
 Who 'mid those elders went ; his boyish face  
 Upturned to heaven, more than that heaven serene.  
 Betwixt the twain austere, in youthful grace  
 Veiling his hidden strength, he firmly trod  
 The upward path with swift unfailing pace ;  
 Named of God's angel, he an angel god  
 Late stooped to earth, early recalled above ;  
 O Sanzio ! thine the form an hour that stood  
 By mine, presentment of the invisible Love.

<sup>1</sup> Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>2</sup> Michelangelo.<sup>3</sup> Prometheus.<sup>4</sup> Raphael.

## CANTO XXIV

Raphael describes his funeral in the Pantheon, and the subsequent decay of Painting—He explains the cause of this decline, the result of national and social decay—Michelangelo appears—The Sistine frescoes—He relates the fall and extinction of Faith and Art—Only a few true artists remain; and Art abides, although its works perish—A triumph of the true artists is seen.

“O THOU who yet, wrapped in the mortal veil

That grossly dims the sight, the grace hast won  
To pass by paths unwont the spirit-pale,  
In me behold the perfect gift to none

Before or after given, in me the doom  
Quenching my light, as swift eclipse the sun.  
Listen. In that famed temple-heart of Rome,

Where all the gods by all mankind revered  
Circling have throned, wide gaped a new-made tomb;  
And near it one, who in death's hour appeared

Not man but angel there, could angels die,  
Was laid, a flower by frost untimely seared.  
But o'er that lifeless form upreared on high,

Art's last best gift, in crowning loveliness  
Transfigured shone the manifest Deity.

Smiling the face, upraised the hands to bless,

But not for earth that smile; a god's farewell

"Was in that blessing, a lost last love's caress.  
Then through the dome commingling with the swell

Of chaunted praise, deep sighs, and wailing pain  
Led up the world-wide dirge of Raphael.

For ne'er while Spring to Winter, sun to rain

Succeeds, to darkness day, to sadness joy,  
Shall my lost beauty visit earth again.

But time and vandal rage, and worse alloy

Of care ill-sorted, of each remnant left  
The tints shall mar, the virgin grace destroy.

And they, the servile crew, that haunt for theft

Art's jewelled shrine, not worship, rob the meed  
Of truth and love, of love and truth bereft.

Unsheaved, unstored the harvest rots ; with weed

O'er-run my garden's pride ; the Summer past  
Sad Autumn's blights and wintry frosts succeed.

O grief of griefs ; even as my steps at last

The summit trod, even as my hand the prize  
Grasped for its own, to void and failure cast."

He ceased, and all around the air with sighs

Was fraught ; and as at eve a sheeted cloud,

Crept a chill shade o'er those warm imageries.

Silent awhile I hearkened, nor allowed

Utterance to thought, such reverence tied my  
tongue,

Till the strong passion framed my words aloud.

"O thou of painters chief, as first in song

Maeonia's bard !<sup>1</sup> what spite, what doom unknown

Has wrought to art and thee such ruinous wrong ?

Why dried the living fount, the flower out-blown,

Thought's fount, art's flower ? the teeming mind, the  
skill,

Heaven's light, earth's beauty, vanished all and gone ?"

Answered Urbino's pride ; "From heaven the ill

Comes not by thee bewept, nor starry fate,

<sup>1</sup> Homer.

"Nor the sure cycles of th' eternal will,  
But as the baser lives that darkling wait

In earth the vigorous growth of Summer's grove,  
And in an hour destroy what years create ;  
So even from that which fosters beauty's love

Is bred what cankers love ; and love destroyed  
Destroys even that which erst itself could move.  
With heaven's best gifts the sated sense is cloyed

Till heaven itself distasteful pales, and next  
The central life is in life's heart destroyed ;  
Nought loved, nought honoured, nought believed ;  
perplexed

The mind, withered the heart, the fountain dry  
Or muddy, dark, heaven's beam no more reflects.  
Lifeless the form, mindless the imagery,

Or vilely soiled, or vain with sordid jest,  
Nature to foulness grown, and art a lie.  
Out-roved the day for food, to evening rest

And callow young the bird comes back, to find  
Nought but a rifled brood, an empty nest.  
With desolate plaint to the ever-wailing wind

All night she answering sits, till morn returns  
Blank as the daylight dawned upon blind eyes.  
But less her loss than his, my loss, who mourns <sup>1</sup>

Love's wasted nest, of beauty's manifold brood  
Empty and void, life's roses dwined to thorns."  
Grieving I heard, and all that multitude

Grieved to my grief responsive ; rocked the ground,  
And the air darkened round us where we stood ;  
Till through that haggard shade there came a sound

As of great wings ; and a strange light that seemed  
not

Of sun or moon or planet orb'd us round.  
In waking truth beheld, in slumber dreamed not,

<sup>1</sup> One MS. reads, *than mine, the hour that mourns* : the syntax has been here left imperfect.

Nor shadowy vision's mockery ; but the truth  
Is for the truth by baser minds esteemed not.  
So be it ; but he, the guardian of my youth,

Teacher and guide, has bid me sing the song,  
Though unadorned the rhyme, and style uncouth.  
For now, high rising 'mid the phantom throng

Stood forth that mighty spirit whom erst I knew  
Archangel named, more than archangel strong.  
Not he whose club Nemea's portent<sup>1</sup> slew

Could match that massive strength, nor statelier rose  
Hyperion, noblest of the Titan crew.

And as from heaven's far depths in fiery shows

Flash forth fantastic lights that pass or stay  
By Arctic seas, and Zembla's haunted snows,  
So the vast visions<sup>2</sup> of mind's mightiest day,

The all-creative Power, the trumpet blast,  
The Sibyl's spell, the Prophet's lightning ray,  
And the dread hour that closes time in past,

Sealing o'er joy or woe th' eternal bar,  
Half seen half lost were round that Presence cast.  
But he as through night's fleeting clouds a star

Unmoved undimmed in steady radiance shines  
From the still peace where things immortal are,  
So calm so free from whatsoe'er confines

This narrow life of ours, Arezzo's boast<sup>3</sup>  
Moved, as the sun goes up the belted signs.  
Then, as at nightfall on some sea-beat coast

Heard the long breaker's roar, the accents came  
Borne on the silence of that listening host.

"All that Time gives, all cunning work of fame,

All that earth girds in her many-woven zone,  
Heaven's star-illumined vault, the central frame,  
Shall fail with Time, a bubble-film outblown ;

<sup>1</sup> The Nemean Lion, slain by Herakles.

<sup>2</sup> *Visions*, the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel.

<sup>3</sup> Michelangelo was born within the diocese of Arezzo.



"How then shall man's frail toil of pictured shade  
Duration claim when substance' self is gone?

Even now from Sistine vaultings pass and fade

The hues that in one likeness God with man  
Blended, and earth with heaven co-partner made.  
Dim grow the angel splendours, faint and wan

Flicker the prophet-fires; and pale to see  
She who earth's earliest blessing wrought and ban.  
From his blurred throne th' avenging Deity

A rayless lightning sends; the dark despair  
Of hell nine-circled sets its prisoners free.

Vanished as birds in depths of viewless air

The angel guard, th' attendant palms, the throne,  
Vanished heaven's self, the meed of baffled prayer.  
Blank the great mirror's face; the semblance gone

Faith pictured there and love; but love and faith  
Fade not nor pass, eternal throned in One.

Nor time o'er these has power, nor chance, nor death,

Nor cyclic law nor starry course may claim

Entrance to their high realm for boon or scathe.

With them, clad with their splendour, crowned with fame,

Are those who on art's altar day by day

Have fed with faithful care Love's visible flame;

Whose patient steps have kept truth's difficult way,

Shunning the Demas pitfall of base gain,

Nor yet by passion's fool-fires lured astray.

These, though their earth-wrought works with earth again

To nought return, in their own strength abide,

Partners and kings in Love's unending reign.

In him their rest, their joy, their crown, their pride,

And her, whose mirrored form they worshipped long,  
The beauty heaven unveils, Love's proper bride."

He ceased; and round him all that Tuscan throng

A jubilant answer gave; and evermore

Love, beauty, truth the burden of their song.

And, "Ours," they sang, "the pearl of price, the store

“From eyes unworthy hid ; to us the clew  
Is given, the pass-word taught, unbarred the door.  
But few the heritors of our kingdom ; few

Our rough-hewn path who tread, our bliss who prove :  
And faint Art's altar-fires, and dim to view  
In Europe's mists the Bethlehem star of Love.”

## CANTO XXV

A vision of Venice : her beauty and glory—Vision of the Embarkment of the expedition under Dandolo : and of the majesty of Venice—Her four great artists : Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto ; respectively representing her Beauty, Glory, Wealth, and Strength ; which survive in their works—Tintoretto's "Crucifixion"—The Spirit of Venice is eternal.

RAPT in the visioned joy by sound and sight  
To sense presented there, I stood like one  
Motionless struck and blind by sudden light,  
Awhile forgetful of the task begun,

That through all secret dooms by Love upstored  
Where time and space are not should lead me on.  
Till he, my heaven's mid-star, my being's lord,

Whose ruddy gleam, of Southern night the gem,  
Compassed my birth, my slackened will restored.  
"Rouse thee," he said, "the nobler diadem

Forget not, the white throne ; the crowning flower  
Thy journey's prize, blooms on a loftier stem ;  
Nor all on these bestow th' allotted hour ;

For wide the further range, and more are they  
Who wait thee where fulfilment perfects power."  
He spoke ; I raised my eyes ; the fair array

Late seen, the Tuscan hills, the song, the glory  
Heard or beheld, like dreams had passed away.  
And Alpine peaks with secular winters hoary  
Girt the far view, and from a waveless sea

Rose the grey wonder of Rialto's story.  
The lion-wings, the sea-born City, she,  
Merchant and warrior Queen, the jewel set  
First in thy forehead's crown, loved Italy ;  
I knew the boatman's cry, the oozy net  
Close by the marble rampart trailed, the sail  
To the salt breeze 'mid dome and palace set ;  
Then most when at roused day-break Adria's gale  
Ruffles the dull lagoon, and drives the haze  
Thwart the wan waters and the star-light pale.  
I knew the magic fretwork on the face  
Wrought of a magic lake ; the Nereid's dream  
Outlasting age by age earth's waking days ;  
The lion-power, whose plumes with eagle gleam  
Shone from the glacier-furrowed Alps afar  
To the hot calm of Nilus' palm-fringed stream.  
Here when all round was darkness else, in war  
Of tyrants matched with tyrants, freedom's sway  
In peaceful wisdom shone, a constant star ;  
Nor storms might veil nor demons quench that ray,  
Though leagued with waves and tempests, and the roar  
Of Genoa's thunder round Murano's bay.<sup>1</sup>  
So firm the heaven-clasped Ducal bond, that more  
Than bridal ring troth-plighted linked in one,  
Venice, thy youth with Adria's surges hoar.  
There high in whitening skies Hesperia's sun  
With splendour filled the square, and porch and dome  
In fivefold beauty held the treasures won  
By venturous rapt from the mis-honoured tomb  
'Mid Egypt's servile hordes, and glowed the sign  
Last sunset splendour of imperial Rome ;  
When the long glories of the Ducal line  
Centred in him<sup>2</sup> whose more than statesman sight

<sup>1</sup> Venice and Genoa were at war 1298-1381. The lines may refer to the fight in which Doge Andrea Contarini drove the Genoese from Chioggia and saved Venice.

<sup>2</sup> Dandolo.

Scanned the decrepitude of the Byzantine.

In age outworn, yet vigorous in the might

Of inmost youth ; his on life's tremulous verge

The head to counsel, and the hand to smite.

Marshalled before, around him, as the surge

Circles a grey rock tower, a gathered crowd

Of warrior chiefs their motley squadrons urge.

So to the destined carcass clanging loud

The trooping vultures sweep ; so swift so wide

Rises o'er heaven's still blue the Indian cloud.

Peasant and prince, the bridegroom from the bride

Sundered the morn, the sower from the sown,

The war-signed veteran there, the youth untried.

All that Venetia's clustered islets own,

All that her breezes fan, her streams infold,

All where her shadow slept or sunlight shone,

The high-born life in palace reared and gold,

The careful tradesman from his Asian wares,

The sturdy gondolier, the young, the old ;

All these were gathered on the granite stairs

Down to the Slavon wharf<sup>1</sup> where, ranged before,

Venetia's galleys wait Byzantium's heirs.

Then, as on wintry eve when frost is hoar,

To the still air upsteams a vaporous cloud

From the home-gathering kine, their pasture o'er,

While answering each to each with voices loud

The herdsmen cry, and ceaseless through the stall

Sound the vain lowings of the horned crowd ;

So with a thin white mist from wall to wall

The square was filled, till lost to separate sight

Were chiefs and followers in that flickering pall.

But from th' infoldings of its nebulous light

Uprisen four mighty shapes came forth, to view

Like the four towers of Cairo's fortress height.

Of rainbow tints inwove with golden hue

<sup>1</sup> Riva de' Schiavoni.

Their garments shone, nor wholly each the same  
Nor diverse yet, but to one kinship true.

There as they stood, the life, the pride, the name,

The city, the harbour, the terraqueous sway  
Mirrored in them, one with themselves became ;  
Till all that subject was to time's decay

From those great shapes a cast-off raiment fell,  
And left them bare in heaven's ethereal ray.

And Venice self transformed, so wrought the spell,

Made one with them, into their likeness passed,  
Time's fairest dream, by Time unchangeable.

Beauty with power informed the first<sup>1</sup> had cast

Around his form ; sun-like the second shone ;  
Gorgeous the third ; of rugged strength the last.  
Then spoke my guide ; "Of fourfold strands in one

Was woven the thread to Venice erst assigned  
By that which metes the courses of the sun.

Whate'er of grace adorns or form or mind,

Whate'er of beauty found in plain or hill,  
Magic of dawn, of even, of cloud, of wind,  
Her portion all were these ; nor taint of ill

Might stain her fount of happy life, nor slime  
Darken the marge of her clear-watered rill.

Hers the bright fullness of the vigorous time

When from the tomb-heaps of old Italy  
Rose the new life, since choked in tears and crime.  
To the strong Western breeze she lifted high

The flags of wealth and conquest, winged by fate  
To farthest Asian shores and Eastern sky.

Her message these ; the pomp, the pride of state,

The golden barge, the Ducal vest, the ring,  
The crown of power bedecked her where she sate.  
And all that trade could grasp or victory bring,

Or artist fancy mould, or luxury crave,  
Clothed her, as clothed with meadow-flowers the Spring.

<sup>1</sup> Giorgione, Titian, Paolo Veronese, Tintoretto.

“ But more than these the pliant strength that gave  
To the fair form endurance, the hid might  
Joyous as life, relentless as the grave.  
So smooth, so gay the painted hide and bright  
That clothes the woodland panther, but beneath  
Th’ unwearying nerves, the sinews tense for fight.  
Queen of a thousand years, for her the wreath  
Of beauty, splendour, power, on empire’s brow  
Wide as the skies above, the seas beneath.  
Perished herself, in these she lives ; and now  
Giorgione’s, Titian’s art, Verona’s Paul,  
And he, the dyer’s son who the great woe  
That veiled the Man-God’s countenance with the pall  
Of ashen twilight could pourtray,<sup>1</sup> retain  
What lesser powers could give not nor recall.  
O sunset lines that fade not, but remain  
A vanished sun’s enduring monument  
By the dim marge of th’ Euganean plain !  
And Brenta’s high-swollen streams in fell consent  
With Adria’s surge may from her islets sweep  
Tower, palace, dome, in sandy ruin blent,  
And o’er what once was Venice, salt and deep  
The recordless waves may weave their idle play ;  
A scroll effaced ; her doom, a dreamless sleep ;  
But these are blazoned on th’ eternal day  
Of the true light that fades not, nor allows  
Eve to its morn, or dimness to its ray.  
Summed up the tale and told, the gilded prows  
No more to victory cleave the deeps, and mourns  
Widowed the sea-lord of his Istrian spouse,  
Yet, Venice, lives thy spirit ; thy beacon burns  
To guide and welcome where wave-wearied rove  
O’er Time’s dark sea the wandering barks, by turns  
Truants and pilgrims of th’ abiding Love.”

<sup>1</sup> The *Crucifixion* within the Scuola di San Rocco. Tintoretto has painted the glory round the Lord’s head in grey.

## CANTO XXVI

The Evening of earth is felt in the Spirit land—I see a vision of a stony plain—My guide rouses me, and we are in the region of Sculpture, where Michelangelo is throned as chief: last of the true sculptors—He shows me those of Pagan and Classical Art—Nearest him are Niccolo Pisano and Donatello—Other Italian sculptors—A vision of noble Sculpture, and the faith, greatness, or beauty it embodies—Classical and Christian subjects—The decay of Faith and Art.

Not here, where pulse of time was not, nor change  
Had power to cheat the sense with varying show  
Of morn or eve or seasons' motley range,  
But on that mother earth to which I owe

This little breath, for nobler promise given  
Than man-born blame can reach or praise bestow,  
Passed had the sunlight veil from bashful even  
That now with hundred starry eyes displayed  
Looked forth from her high throne in cloudless heaven ;  
And all was still, save when through depths of shade

Some meteor sped, or to his distant mate  
Called a lone night-bird from the wooded glade.  
And I, though by Love's guiding power, with fate  
Confederate, freed from time's successive chain  
Awhile, yet felt the hour, a slumbrous weight  
Laid on my eyes and soul, as on the brain



Some opiate broods, when sleep and waking share  
O'er the half-conscious sense divided reign ;  
Till tower, and dome, and pictured diaper

Of wall, with the great forms to sight displayed  
Quivered and faded as a dawn-trapped star ;  
And in their place an open field, o'erlaid

With shivered blocks that of Carrara's grain  
Or Paros told, our doubtful footsteps stayed :  
For pathway here was none, but through the plain

Great lines of shattered wall, and heaps of stone  
Confusedly thrown, of purpose void and vain.

"Onward," then thus my guide, "the marvels shown

Of pictured Art, with Nature's self the skill

Coequal made, fair beauty's perfect throne,

Hast thou beheld ; yet more remains, and ill

Should'st thou the portioned realm whose bounds  
enfold

Art's noblest sons, lords of the lustral hill,

Unheeded pass ; nor any worthier hold

Than they who heaven-inspired, from brass or stone  
Gave to invisible godhead human mould.

Conquerors of time their works abide ; each one

Mirror to men, though worn and part defaced,  
Of mind on which th' eternal beauty shone.

Strange that the work inanimate should outlast

The hand that made it and the heart that planned,  
And Art abide where Nature flows to waste."

He ceased ; I looked and saw where from the sand

Fresh springing flowers of wondrous form and hue  
In starlike semblance spangled o'er the land.

And far as sight could reach the heaven's pale blue

Poured down diaphanous light, by flowers and ground  
Upward in myriad rays returned anew.

Midmost the space, throned on a marble mound

Sat one<sup>1</sup> to sight well known ; his furrowed brow

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo.

Leaned on his hand, in deepest musings bound ;  
Like him who a sought goal has reached, and now

Finds him no nearer to the purposed aim,  
And fain would further pass, yet knows not how.  
Last of the demigods he, in whom the name,

Mightiest of names, was Truth ; in him the scroll  
Closed the great list of those whom earlier fame  
Writ 'mid the gods or godlike : Round her pole

Earth circles, suns arise and set, the care  
Of Nature weaves through parts her daedal whole ;  
But second or like to thee, Etruria's heir,

Nor suns revolved nor seasons bring ; nor time  
To earth relenting may that loss repair.

As one who journeying from far distant clime

Reverend some sacred relic guarded high  
On the veiled shrine approaches, when the chime  
Of the shrill-tinkling bell bids every eye

Behold, and every knee adoring bow,  
And longs to approach, yet fears to venture nigh ;  
So, towards that Titan form and awful brow

Half drawn by longing, half by fear repelled  
Was I, nor dared in words my thought t' avow.  
But that great spirit in equal balance held

'Twixt proud reserve and pitiful tenderness,  
With beckoning hand my forward step compelled,  
Till by his side I stood ; though steep, th' access

Gave footing firm and prospect to survey  
The promised pageant of that last recess.  
Before us all who to the earlier day

Of Egypt, Greece, or Rome in sculpture gave  
Heirlooms of gladness, joy of ages ; they  
Who from ethereal heights or violet wave

Hermes or Aphrodite called, and drew  
Oread or Satyr from the vine-clad cave,  
Immortal made by mortals, in clear view

They and their works displayed, a shining band

To the great Master made obeisance due.  
But chiefest two, sent from Etruria's land  
Mother of noblest sons, approached the heights  
Where Buonarotti throned ; from Pisa's strand  
The first<sup>1</sup> ; as one to whom a sudden light

After long darkness shines yet dazzles not,  
Such was his aspect, who the ugly night,  
Of barbarous North and effete East begot,  
Alone dispelled, and to fair Italy  
Restored her beauty's heirloom long forgot,  
Till the pure truth of Hellas' imagery

In grace recast the unsightly shapes, that erst  
Imaged new worship to the Christian eye.  
Second in time,<sup>2</sup> but mightier than the first

In craft and wile, thy vigorous beauty shone,  
Art-flower of Florence, loved Donato, nursed  
At Nature's breast, to studious manhood grown

Perfect in skill : the Martyr's warrior grace,<sup>3</sup>  
And Jesse's champion son,<sup>4</sup> in brass or stone,  
The children troops<sup>4</sup> of mimic song, the face

Furrowed with tears of penitent Magdalen,<sup>5</sup>  
Judah's dread matron,<sup>6</sup> these in equal place  
And many more beside, on earth again

'Twas thine to bring ; so well thy art assigned  
What best in men to gods, in gods to men.  
In these complete the list ; nor hand nor mind

Of lesser days to these can add ; the shrine  
Closed to the pilgrim, sealed the book and signed.  
Then spoke my brother guide ; " A power divine

Was on man's earth and is not ; never more  
Shall marble form or rainbow-tinted line  
Their vanished gods to dying men restore ;

Shivered the heaven-lent glass ; the mirrored star

<sup>1</sup> Niccolo Pisano.

<sup>3</sup> S. George at Or San Michele.

<sup>6</sup> In the Baptistry.

<sup>2</sup> Donatello.

<sup>4</sup> In the Bargello Museum.

<sup>6</sup> In the Loggia de' Lanzi.

"Is but a memory of night's cancelled store.  
But thou with sense freed from each limiting bar  
Of time and cause look up, where yet displayed  
In their own truth to thee the things that are."  
Reverent I heard, nor to the voice delayed

Obedience due, and saw where o'er us bent  
What seemed a crystal dome with forms pourtrayed,  
Infinite, as the heaven's own element

Seen through Thaumantia's<sup>1</sup> iridescent bow,  
And hyaline depths with vaporous splendour blent.  
Olympus there, and Cretan Ida's snow,

And Sinai's crags, and Thabor's mystic hill,  
And the cool heights whence Tiber's waters flow.  
There too the lords of fight, whom that fair ill<sup>2</sup>

Of Greece and Troy the bane, from Hellas drew  
To dye with hero blood Scamander's rill:  
And there th' incarnate strength Jove-born,<sup>3</sup> who slew

Geryon with Lerna's pest; yet could not quell  
The craft of Nessus; there the Centaur crew,  
Boast of Athene's Phidian citadel;<sup>4</sup>

And they<sup>5</sup> through Euxine gates, unoped before,  
Who sought on Colchian shores the golden fell;  
And the famed wanderers on Aeaea's<sup>6</sup> shore

Awhile from fate reprieved; but fate's decree  
For respite given has double ills in store.  
All these, and more besides in like degree,

And with them some by beauty garlanded  
With fadeless praise in love's eternity;  
Hylas, and Hyacinthus, and the maid<sup>7</sup>

Too well by Phoebus loved; and whom thy wile,  
Jealous Aurora, slew; Euboea's glade,

<sup>1</sup> Iris.<sup>2</sup> Helen.<sup>3</sup> Herakles.<sup>4</sup> Sculptured in the metopes of the Parthenon.<sup>5</sup> Iason and the Argonauts.<sup>6</sup> *Aeaea*, a mythical island where Odysseus found Circe reigning.<sup>7</sup> Daphne.

Procris, yet mourns thy fate ; nor less the while,  
Bent o'er th' eclipse of her love-worshipped sun,<sup>1</sup>  
Grieves the Queen-goddess of Cythera's isle.  
And with them shapes divine were seen, each one

In his own regioned birth-place ; there with Jove  
Hyperion throned, and blessed Mary's Son,  
And the fair shapes of Tempe's haunted grove

Dryads, and Oreads, and with myrtle crowned  
She, the rapt prophet <sup>2</sup> of the Cuman cove,  
Dying yet deathless ; and beside her frowned

The woe-denouncing seers of Syria's hills.  
And some whose brows the aureole rays surround  
Of saintdom, won from heaven through earth's worst ills,  
Eremites, virgins, martyrs, and all those

In whom the eternal life its law fulfils,  
From earth's vain misery brought to sure repose ;

Bearers of truth's entrusted torch, whose flame  
Unvexed, undimmed in mist and tempest glows.  
Still burns that god-lit fire ; but not the same

On earth its lustre ; outward form no more  
Mirrors to man the God of uttered name,  
Pagan or Christian ; vain the careful lore,

The transcript features vain ; soul-less and cold  
The mimicked art that would art's truth restore.

Then, as I gazed, upgathering fold on fold  
Floated an earth-sprung mist, around, above ;

Till like a landscape blurred, a tale out-told,  
Vanished the pageant of incorporate Love.

<sup>1</sup> Adonis,—the Spring, here equated with Phoebus.

<sup>2</sup> The Cumaean Sibyl.

## CANTO XXVII

I have now beheld the first two regions, and the purgation of Ambition and of Art — What remain, — earthly Love, Religious belief, Science, Knowledge, Pleasure, are also states of intermediate lustration : the Eternal is beyond—We are now on the beach of an inland sea ; the farther shore densely wooded—I make an act of absolute love and submission to my Guide, who relates how he had protected me thus far against the snares of Ambition, Love, and Religion—A Boat appears—In it is the apparition (seen before at the barrier) of earthly Love—Against his power my Guide promises help —We embark.

“ BECAUSE of all men present found or past,  
Thou art elected by my singular grace  
To know the thing that shall the sign outlast ;  
Because compassionate love from my high place  
Has drawn me down to thee, with thee to stand  
Presence to presence visible, face to face ;  
Because the limits of man’s utmost strand  
Thou hast outgone, borne by my power and led  
Where time is not, nor space, nor sea, nor land ;  
Well hast thou fared, and well thy footsteps sped  
By the dim portals of the mystic West  
Through the twin realms of those, miscalled the dead,  
Who in themselves or art-wrought type expressed  
Th’ eternal Strength and Beauty ; echoes they

"Of the far Truth, blest gospel of the blest.  
Th' unerring guidance theirs, the excellent way,  
Yet not the ultimate goal; earth's weeds, earth's  
flowers

Too oft their steps detained in fond delay;  
So to the symbol not the fact their powers  
Were given, a thankless gift; till summed in vain  
Unguerdoned closed their life-long count of hours;  
Nor wholly loss their lot, nor perfect gain.

But keener joys than theirs and worse distress  
Five-regioned to thy onward path remain.

Theirs first, self-bound and bondaged to the stress  
Of earthly Love, whom all that lives, but most  
Earth's best and noblest sons their lord confess.  
Theirs next who ventured all, or gained or lost,

A doubtful cast, to follow her, the lure  
Of souls, who in th' Eternal makes her boast.  
These shalt thou visit, and in their lot, secure

Thyself, such power is mine, behold the doom  
Love and Religion to thy kin procure.

For theirs an infinite joy, with infinite pain

Ever entwined, a fire-fount marged with snow,  
A sunshine gleam, through drifts of icy rain.

These past, through further realms thy path must go

Where Science reaps its tilth; and, near, the bloom  
Faded or fadeless of the poet brow

Be thine t' appraise aright; and last their doom

Who being's store on being's self expended,  
Pleasure their goal in life, in death the tomb.

These the seven threads, or singly woven or blended

In life's recurrent loom; broidered and spun  
From these the robe o'er man's dull earth extended.

The intermediate this; its bounds outgone,

What last awaits thy path, not mine to tell  
Nor thine to hear, till the great Vision won."

As falls on springing grass light rain, so fell

On my glad ears these spoken words, the while  
Entranced I lay in love's soul-quickeningspell.  
The face, my childhood's dream, the form, the smile

In feature limned and hue, the vision long  
Desired, in part revealed, in part awhile  
Deferred, by thought ungrasped, untold in song

Others' or mine, unveiled beside me then  
In singular beauty shone ; no visioned throng  
Joyous or sad, no semblanced form of men

Hero or saint was there ; vanished and gone  
Each godlike shape, that vale's late denizen ;  
Vanished the valley's self, the pageant flown ;

And in its place our fronted way before  
Waveless and blue a glassy water shone.  
In yellow sand sloped at our feet the shore ;

But all the further bank in distance seen  
Down to the marge a tree-fringed mantle wore,  
Of tangled boughs inwoven and glossy green ;

As where on tideless shores the lithe Malay  
Moors his light skiff beneath the mangrove screen ;  
Or where the streams down-rolled from far Cathay

In Siam's gulf their waters blend, and make  
'Twixt plummy palm and matted fern their way ;  
A mass perplexed, even to the sinuous snake

Impenetrable ; which not the down-poured heat  
Of noon can pierce, or slanted whirlwinds shake.

Then I, "Since power, nor art, nor regal seat,

Nor beauty wrought to sculptured form, may grant  
The perfect gift, life's goal, nor guide the feet ;—  
Faded the flowers, blighted the orchard, scant

The light to earth's great darkness ; farther lies  
The better hope ; thou know'st,—fulfil the want ;  
Through thee, that want's fulfilment ; in thy eyes

Mirrored the goal I seek ; thy hand the key  
Holds to unbar my forfeit Paradise.

And if aught else my eyes desire to see,



"My ears to hear, my thought to know, from all  
These visioned scenes, not in themselves, but thee,  
The answer lies ; writ on the temple wall

The letters they, mis-shaped ; but thou the book,  
The echoes they ; thyself Love's homeward call."  
As sunlight poured on flowers, with such a look

Those eyes, that heaven resumed, on mine in place  
Responsive beamed, as pleased these words he spoke :  
"Brother and nearest, of my kindred race

Dearer and nearer none ; as child and boy  
Rescued by me from lesser love's disgrace,  
From thee through manhood's years vain grief, vain joy,

The dust of life, my care removed, and kept  
Love's gold untarnished by base earth's alloy.  
And in the hours when toil-outwearied slept

Thy spirit in nightly rest, I sent the train  
That o'er thy dream a warning pageant swept.  
Else vain thy strength, thy heaven-born purpose vain,

As theirs whom now, midmost the lustral crowd  
Shalt thou behold in self-won loss or gain."

He spoke, and pointed where as flits a cloud

Instinct with living fire athwart the blue  
When Summer's height to Autumn's verge has bowed,  
So on that watery smoothness where the view

Met the dark fringe of boughs enlaced, a boat  
Glided, a golden streak of sunbright hue.

Nor oar nor outlined sail I saw, remote

Nor near, it mocked th' enquiring sight ; a gleam  
Seen, not defined, like maiden love's first thought.  
Then as I gazed, across the midway stream

Sudden it darted, through the liquid night  
As darts from depths unseen a meteor beam ;  
Till full revealed in its own quivering light

That ceaseless went and came from stem to prow  
Even where we stood the galley paused in sight.  
No earth-born shape was there, but in the glow

Of roseate gold translucent him who erst  
In beauty lured me up the mountain brow  
Again I knew ; again th' insatiate thirst

Of Love and Beauty thrilled me, the desire  
Blest in pursuit, in late attainment cursed.  
So hastes the insect's wing to withering fire ;

So leaps the cataract to its shattering fall ;  
So sinks the meteor's flight in marsh and mire.  
And this and more I knew, yet might not all

Resist the manifest spell ; such lustre shone  
From that too lovely face, so strong the spell.  
Trembling I turned me to my guide ; "Thy own

Am I, sole hope, solé guardian ; this the hour  
Of the great venture ; thou my trust alone.  
For perilous are the ways and dread the power

Of Love, the Lord ; nor human foot may brave  
Unharmed the path, nor tread the sorcerer's bower."  
Gently the Master smiled, "The lion's cave

The lion fearless seeks ; to guard be mine,  
Thine to obey ; no more ; be wise, be brave."  
Thus while he spoke, as some new-gilded shrine

Glitters from wall to wall, when evening's rite  
Bids countless lamps from roof and altar shine,  
Not less that wondrous bark with spangly light

Glittering received its freight ; then to th' expanse  
Of the mid waters winged its self-taught flight.  
Nor more I saw nor knew, so deep a trance

Enwrapped me, till we reached the destined grove,  
Where dwell those noblest fools of Time's mischance  
Vassals of love-born Faith, or faithless Love.



## BOOK II



## CANTO I

The Third Kingdom—Invocation to Love—We land in a wood,  
and a cry leads us upward, when Helen of Troy flits as a  
shadow on the path—She declares herself perfect Beauty, and  
offers to conduct me through her vassals—My guide agrees,  
but will accompany us unseen.

FIRST-BORN of earth and heaven ; of both the Lord

O Love ! of both the outcast thou ; thy name  
Twofold, by turns reviled, by turns adored ;

On thee supremest praise, on thee worst blame,

Curses and hymns alternate wait, but thou  
Changeless abid'st, for those and these the same.

O'er all who live thy power, to thee they bow

Freemen or slaves alike ; on earth thy feet,  
In heaven the splendour of thy aureoled brow.

Diverse thy act's effect, not thou ; as heat

Hardens to rock th' enamelled imagery,  
But melts the frost-work fret from lawn and street.

Or as some long-forgotten melody,

Heard after years, awakes with equal spell  
Pleasure or pain, as bids the memory.

But thou in heights of heaven or depths of hell

No change endur'st, nor by division less

Nor more thy power, alone, immutable.

All loss, all grief, all anguish, all distress

Transparent in thy ray, transformed by thee  
Honour become, and life, and happiness.  
Where thou art not, life is not ; of the tree

Whose leaves are years, whose stem the universe,  
Whose fruit are worlds, whose roots eternity,  
The quickening sap thou art ; the poet's verse,

The artist's skill, the conqueror's wreath, the praise  
That of immortal deeds is child and nurse,—

Sweet youth, spring breezes, summer's genial days,

The soft caress of dawn's awakening breath,  
When briefest night, and eve till morn delays,  
These are thy buds, thy flowers ; these weave the wreath

Round thy flushed temples bound ; their beauty  
thine ;

From thee they take ; parting, to thee bequeath.  
On thee I call ; assist me, lest the line

By thee untutored fail, as failed the wing  
Of him<sup>1</sup> whose fate misnamed th' Icarian brine.  
No usual joys, no common woes I sing,

But theirs who, to thy voice obedient proved,  
Thy choicest sweets assayed, thy keenest sting.  
Of such was I, thou know'st it ; thine approved

In perilous days and strange, till wiser grown  
In love, more than thy gifts thyself I loved.

In all that lives thou art, but most thy throne

Is in the human heart ; be, Lord, in mine,  
Be in my voice, my verse ; through thee be known  
The trophies of thy empire, the long line

Of those thy vassals known in weal or woe,  
Mine to record ; the praise, the memory thine.

—Such words or like to these from the full flow

Of my pressed heart I spoke, when first the strand  
Gave rest and welcome to our freighted prow.

And now glad on the beach we stood ; the sand

Up from the margin sloped ; in front a wood

<sup>1</sup> Icarus, who fell into the south-east part of the Aegæan Sea.

Made narrow free-way to the new-trod land.  
Doubtful awhile which way to turn we stood,  
Of guidance fain ; but voice nor movement showed  
Save the quick glances of the rippling flood ;  
Not long, till near us on the left I heard,  
As when through the hushed depths of stillest noon  
Calls on her roving mate some nested bird,  
Or thrush, or pleasant oriole ; clear the tone  
Came on the listening ear ; we looked, but shape  
Of sentient life or guiding will was none.  
So to that cry we turned us, where a cape  
Thrust forth a pebbly ridge ; and through the heap  
Seawards a little streamlet found escape :  
And such a narrow path as mountain sheep  
May fray through briar and bush, beside the rill  
Made covert opening up the woodland steep.  
A torrent bed the way, stone-piled ; and still  
Vaulted with densest copse, and faint the gleam  
Of day, though high the noon on plain and hill.  
But here through th' interlacing boughs no beam  
Could pierce direct or slant ; and scarce the tread  
Darkling might choose 'twixt slippery ledge and stream.  
Then gradual, step by step, the path outspread  
Broader and easier grown ; and the blue sky  
Patched with glad light the greenwood overhead.  
Then, as in new-found freedom roved my eye,  
Something I saw that oft our pathway crossed  
Like mirrored light, flashed on the passers-by ;  
Vaporous at first in outline, as a ghost  
That has outstayed its term ; then clearer drawn  
In human form distinct it showed ; then lost  
Or doubtful : So, new venturing on the lawn  
From birth-place coverts, courts yet shuns caress  
Proffered by beckoning hands a wanton fawn.  
But this was beauty's self, nor words express  
Nor thought may image forth, though memory's aid



Be summoned all, that perfect loveliness.

A sexless shape at first it seemed, arrayed

In its own roseate light ; a double grace  
Female, or male, or both, its limbs displayed ;  
Then all to woman grew, till last the face,

Earth's wonder, pride of Hellas,<sup>1</sup> bane of Troy,  
Avowed the god-born flower of Leda's race.

Untold I knew that form, th' incarnate joy

Of full-flushed Venus, knew the fateful charm  
That wrought fierce madness in th' Idaean boy ;

Whence Ilium mourned in ruin ; yet could disarm .

The wrath of injured Greece, th' avenging blow ;  
Such, beauty's love-lent power to heal or harm.

Then with a voice sweeter than music's flow

When oared with mirth and song by Como's walls

In their gay bark the revellers glide and go,

She spoke ; "From Sparta's coasts to Ilion's halls

Fated I came, of Love and Death the Queen ;  
Two worlds my footstool, and their kings my thralls.

For mine all beauty ; mine the grace serene

Beauty's best bloom ; the brightness that outshines  
Whate'er of else is, shall be, or has been.

The net that draws, the chain that all entwines,

My birthright these ; to the world's end my name  
Writ 'mid the splendours of heaven's burning signs.

Nor false nor traitress I : no slanderous shame

My pure perfection mars ; if aught there were  
Blameful, on men's surmise, not me, the blame.

From sweetest flowers the wizard's envious care

The deadliest draughts distils ; the crystal glass  
Stainless itself, reflects or foul or fair.

Times change to what they were not ; ages pass,

But sovereign beauty all to her decree

Draws, as the loadstone draws the magnet's mass."

A space she paused ; then smiling ; "Would'st thou see

<sup>1</sup> Helen.

"My vassals? count their ranks?—though easier far  
Numbered the wind-driven ridges of the sea,  
When raves November's storm on Istria's bar;<sup>1</sup>

Or when still frosty nights have bared the skies,  
To count and reckon each particular star.  
Thou wilt; I read thy answer in thy eyes,

Though mute thy speech; for this the trusty guide  
Led thee by visioned scenes and form's disguise.  
By him, by me, be led;—my steps beside

Secure shalt thou the manifold snares explore  
In love's mid pathway spread, by few descried,  
By fewer scaped:—and first their doom deplore

Who reckless grasp the thorn-surrounded rose,  
Too late with tears bedropped, besprent with gore.  
Next, with like fate, unlike deservings, those

Who twined with poisonous growths of fraud and  
wrong

Love's flowers, till withered both in deathly close.  
Nor absent they through miry ways and long

Love's pilgrims stainless found; the faithful few  
True to the end th' unfaithful herd among.  
Happy their lot! less happy those, the crew

By evil dreams beguiled, the partners made  
Of powers unblest, to Love's great laws untrue.  
And others there whom fate's untimely shade

Caught and oppressed ere noon; guilty they died  
Or guiltless, one their portion; some betrayed,  
Betrayers some; nor wanting there who cried

All lost for Love, well lost: and some Love's dower  
Bartered, ill choice, for gain or easeful pride.  
All these and many more confessed the power

Of beauty seen or fancied; for the eye  
Full oft is pander to th' illusive hour."

She spoke; her suasive words, the witchery

Of her sweet smile, captive detained me there,

<sup>1</sup> Mouth of the Danube (?) or, an Adriatic seaport (?)

Bound to assent, yet doubtful of reply.

Till he, my guide, of my heart's thought aware

Thus answer made ; "Helen, the portal key  
Of this thick-peopled realm, th' apportioned share  
Of earthly love on earth made void, to thee

He gave whose gifts abide ; to lead be thine,  
To follow ours, so wills the high decree.

Thou too, my brother, demur not, nor repine

Her voice awhile t' obey ; the passion known  
Earthly, demands a guide of earthly line.

A stranger I not citizen here ; my throne

Of other ore compact ; but she the queen

Till the full tale complete, the term outgone.

Yet present I, though hid ; the stars serene

By day as night shine on ; unchecked their rays

Pour their strong influence through the noontide screen :

Till past the utmost bound, the circling maze

Woven by the human sense, the human heart,  
Again we tread the spirit's kindred ways ;

In show, not truth, dissociate ; thus we part

A little space ; the while be thine to rove

With her thy guide, best skilled the love t' impart

In wise unwisdom hid, the love of Love."

## CANTO II

The cry heard before summons us to the guarded grove—Here first are those who have loved in vain—Here is seen Dido: Cephalus lamenting Procris, and one of Amalfi with his drowned Love.

THE child who from his mother's custom'd smile  
And birthplace-home forth sent to lodgment new  
And guardians strange, each voice each face awhile  
Distrustful hears and sees ; and oft his view

Around him sidelong throws, if chance to find  
Aught that recalls the known, the trusted few,  
His childhood's friends ; so I with doubtful mind,

Reft of that loved companionship till now  
Inseparate, followed my new guide assigned.  
With little toil we gained the ridgy brow

Whence, like Ligurian fields from Lombard towers  
Beheld, a level plain spread far below.

And hedgerow lines inwove with budding flowers

Such as Spring loves, enmeshed with curious maze  
Meadows, and lawns, and sun-illumined bowers.  
And, " Here the appointed mansion, here delays,"

So spoke the Ledan Queen, " their term whom love  
Twined in the labyrinth fold of passionate days."  
Not yet her words had ceased when clear above

Outrang the note first by the sea-beach heard,  
Guide to the entrance of that guarded grove.

Upward I looked, for there what seemed a bird  
Bright-eyed, with jewelled plume, and beak of gold,  
Hovered our heads above ; the warm air stirred  
By the ever-quivering wings fluttered the fold

Of the light robe that girt dame Helen's breast,  
And waved the ringlet o'er those ivories rolled.

"Here," thus again the note was loud, "the rest

Of love's outwearied pilgrims ; here at even  
Is of each mateless bird the folding nest.

Of love in death made perfect this the heaven,

Of blood for tears poured forth this the reward,  
Of life for love resigned the guerdon given."

Thus while it sung down the green slant of sward

My steps with secret force were drawn, till soon  
I reached the wild-briar hedge, and circling guard.  
With every flower that opes to sunniest June

Thick-set the ground ; the rose, the jasmine there,  
The flaunted rival of the day-star's noon,  
Tall lilies, close-set hyacinths, pansies fair,

And fairer yet, the flower by nymphs beloved,<sup>1</sup>  
Beautiful child of beauty's self-despair.

O'er these and countless more my vision roved

Pleased, yet amazed ; for each of crimson hue,  
Whate'er its form, to the light breezes moved.

Not other shows some landscape to the view

Through tinted glass, where in one ruddy stain  
Is blent the forest green, the skiey blue.

The while my gentle guide and courteous, fain

My doubt to solve, thus spoke ; "Thy wonderment  
Easy solution finds and answer plain.

They whose dear loves on earth untimely shent<sup>2</sup>

Were quenched in blood by self or foemen shed,  
Have this their realm with mimic hue besprent."

<sup>1</sup> The hyacinth, sprung from the blood of a youth loved by Apollo.

<sup>2</sup> Properly, *shamed* : used here apparently for *ruined*.

Thus she ; but ere in answering guise my head

I turned, even now a form<sup>1</sup> of witching grace  
And queenly bearing sad and measured tread  
Before us passed ; again I looked, that face

Eager to scan, but nought was there to tell  
Who, or how brought to th' immemorial place.

"Myself thou know'st not yet ; but all too well

My tale thou know'st," thus spoke that royal form,  
"Blazed in Love's loftiest heaven, Love's saddest hell.  
What time by Venus roused the ill-purposed storm

Me with Troy's perjured chief to that dark cave  
Drove where the fateful hours of shame deform  
The seal affixed, and from a husband's grave

Roused up the vengeful ghost, no more to rest  
Till sunk Troy's Rome, a Punic Vandal's slave.<sup>2</sup>  
Here, here," she cried, and bared her riven breast,

"The double fount ; not redder though more wide  
Is Phlegethon's stream ; rest, wronged Sichaeus, rest."  
No more she spoke, but past ; silent my guide

Smiled as in pitying scorn ; but I for grief  
Wept, and love's due by fate to love denied.

Nor less perplexed why of earth's good the chief

Earth's cruellest ill should prove, and why withheld  
From life's worst wrongs save through worse wrongs  
relief.

And why to opposite act by fate compelled

Duty and love ; and what the one confers  
Is by the other in hostile guise repelled.

The lawn is now close embowered with trees of crimson blossom. Here lies Procris, dying in the arms of Cephalus. We now reach a lake, lovely even as those of Italy. A wretched old man, unnamed, is seen ; he is of Amalfi ; was visited in his island dwelling by his Love, who, drowned by her brother's treachery, is now held in his arms.

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<sup>1</sup> Dido.

<sup>2</sup> Sack of Rome by the Vandals.

### CANTO III

In a fiery vision Love himself appears—Innumerable martyrs of passion go by in a mighty train—A youth invites me to remain and learn the history of Love's pilgrims.

Helen assures me of the vast number of Love's devotees: a sudden glare as of fire breaks forth: Helen vanishes, and Love is seen in his despotic splendour: The air round him is stirred by the invisible presence of multitudinous life. Then the vision passes,

and loud and clear

Came voices, songs of death with victory crowned.  
Whilst from the further lawn approaching near  
Such crowds as some great city's festal day  
Might send afield to greet the springtide year,  
With chaunt and garlands wreathed and vestments gay,  
So was the throng that o'er the limitless plain  
In broad procession trod the flower-paved way.  
'Twixt joy and sadness held, a seemly train  
They passed in sight, and on each face displayed  
Was calm assurance sealed o'er inward pain.  
A flaming heart enwoven with crimson braid  
Each vestment bore, of other symbol bare,  
And round each head a roseate halo played:  
Not ruddier gleam through winter's frosted air

Low skirting suns at even : with this the red  
Clothed on the love-bird's breast might ill compare.  
Thus, yet not wholly thus, their radiance shed

Those crimson gleams that from Love's riven breast  
Forth issuing, orb'd in light each martyr head.  
Not theirs the satiate calm, the perfect rest,

Though passed the barrier gate,—as birds in flight  
Scaped the hawk's chase, nor yet the sheltering nest  
Attained, though near ; on circling pinions light

Poising they float, nor fold the outstretched wing  
Awhile, nor beat the air ;—so these to sight  
Nor restful all nor restless ; but the sting

Of memory rankles yet, nor absolute joy  
Nor pain to these the lustral ages bring.

And passionate hope remains, and past annoy

Yet unforget, and the death-purchased pleasure  
They reached, yet might not what they reached enjoy ;  
Till paid strong passion's debt, fulfilled the measure

By justest laws ordained for those who served  
In part their own, part the high Master's pleasure.  
So from the perfect path aside they swerved,

Nor the full goal attained, till death that erred not  
Atonement made, or from worse ill preserved.  
And some to life's true worth life's self preferred not,

But ventured all for all, the narrower bar  
Of self o'erleapt, the siren voices heard not.  
By this, the rose-paved valley near and far

Was dense with martyr forms, yet each from each  
Distinct, as flower from flower or star from star.  
And all I knew, nor aught their tale to teach

Was needed there ; present to me the past  
Embodied stood, far as past ages reach,  
Up to the vision-gifted morn, when cast

My lot an hour with theirs ; their joys I knew,  
Their pangs, their hopes, their doom, their first, their  
last.



Till, as with morn's first gleam the thick-fallen dew  
Weeps day's disclosure near, so filled my eyes  
With tears at the world's wrong made clear in view.

Helen again appears: the crowd of Love's martyrs  
pass into calm, whilst she names them. A youth  
speaks :

"Whom here thou seest," to me  
Such were his words, "in chronicled prose or rhyme  
Emblazoned, or to later memory

Unknown, unwrit, unsung, yet all are they  
Who loyal sealed in blood Love's sovereignty.  
But thou, whoe'er thou art, who earth's pale day

Again shalt view returning, whence in truth  
Few have returned or none, a difficult way,  
Here bide awhile, and learn what deeds of ruth,

What darings high, what tenderest longings led  
From the vain show to where the eternal Sooth<sup>1</sup>  
Begins its reign, not perfects ; farther shed

As on low hills the silvery dawn, above  
Is the sought goal for Love's true pilgrims, led  
Through change and death, to deathless, changeless  
Love."

<sup>1</sup> *Sooth*, Truth.

## CANTO IV

The youth leads me where are Guinevere, Orpheus, and others ;  
followed by more heroic forms, headed by Mark Antony—I  
ask for Cleopatra, and learn that she with other sinners is  
undergoing lustral penance elsewhere—I see Imelda and  
Bonifazio.

As who 'mid galleried domes, a nation's store

Of form eterne in stone or pictured grace

Wanders, intent on art's successive lore,

And entering finds apart in special place

The work of earliest years, when unripe skill

What the mind saw gave not the hand to trace,—

And these beyond, the mightier ones who fill

With perfect art bodied from perfect thought

The loftiest summit of the Aeonian hill,—

Enwrap he gazes, till the wonders sought

O'ermaster sense ; and for delight mere awe

Remains, and dread by present godhead wrought ;

Even so was I when gathered there I saw

Love's hero-martyrs, each a priceless gem

In the great Crown set by eternal law,

Mightiest of Lords, on thee ; for thou to them

Art paramount right and wrong ; and thou and  
they

Are each to each guerdon and diadem.

I see that the youth, my present guide, bears signs of violent death.

Low was his voice yet clear ; "The foremost place  
Of those thou seest," he said, "to her<sup>1</sup> belongs  
Who wrought for Britain's peers disastrous days,  
By Camelot's guilty court, and Arthur's wrongs :  
And close beside in Thracian guise the lord<sup>2</sup>  
Of beasts and men, such kingship crowned his songs,  
Himself the slave of love ; the powers abhorred  
Of hell's dark caves he dared, to break the chain  
Of her long sought, late found, in vain restored.  
Next following hand in hand thou seest the twain<sup>3</sup>

Who found by Ninus' tomb their own ; the fate  
That dyed th' o'erbranching fruit with purple stain.  
And linked in lot with these,<sup>4</sup> though by far date  
Sundered, the pair whom towered Verona mourns,  
Dear offerings on the altar-fires of hate,  
Proud Capulet's feud and Moneschalchi's scorns :—

But from that death was life ; so 'mid their peers  
Brightest on them th' eternal splendour dawns.  
O but for these and like to these the years

Were rayless all and dim ! through these alone  
Is earth commensurate with the heavenly spheres.  
A sunless sky, a featureless mask of bone,

A withered tree, nor bark nor foliage there,  
Were else thy meed, O little world and lone."

Next, following these, a band I saw more fair  
Than fresh-blown flowers in grass and hedge ; the  
smile

Of wakening fields roused by the springtide air.

There the lost victim of the Naiads' guile,

Hylas, and whom the Syrian stream in blood  
Yearly records ;<sup>5</sup> from old Trinacria's isle

<sup>1</sup> Guinevere.

<sup>2</sup> Orpheus.

<sup>3</sup> Pyramus and Thisbe.

<sup>4</sup> Romeo and Juliet.

<sup>5</sup> Tammuz-Adonis.

To Britain's mist-veiled coasts and Avon's flood<sup>1</sup>

Song-famed Adonis ; and the leaf-traced word  
Of self-upbraiding grief, thy passionate mood  
Helios, of light and life all-powerful lord,

But powerless whom thou lovedst<sup>2</sup> from envious night  
To save, the loved one's death thy love's reward.  
All these my happy eyes with such delight

As his who first on Eden gazed, surveyed,  
Now perfect made by death in deathless light.

Love's greater warriors now appear ; more glowing, but  
sterner and some more aged than those before seen—  
Mark Antony leads them—I ask where is Cleopatra ?  
The youth answers,

“Where dateless years of gloom efface

The life misused, 'mid the dark groves thy path  
Hitherward crossed, she finds her lustral place.  
There all whom angered love's avenging wrath

Has doomed to second death, the punishment  
Of wasted life, dark crime, and violate faith.  
With her Mycaenae's queen,<sup>3</sup> and th' other sent

Death-gift to France from death-stricken Italy,  
Catharine,<sup>4</sup> red star of slaughter's firmament.  
But not on these be now thy thought, nor I

Would such in memory bear ; to each his part,  
And other mine, and sure.” Then from the sky  
Such radiance round us shone, that all my heart

With joy was filled, and constant faith that fails not,  
Though present help be none, and hope depart,  
And closed the iron net, and strength avails not

The prisoned life to free ; the pain that seals

<sup>1</sup> Alludes to Shakespeare's early *Venus and Adonis*, and to *Paradise Lost*, i. 446.

<sup>2</sup> Hyacinthus, cf. C. ii. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Clytemnestra.

<sup>4</sup> Catharine de' Medici.

Love's ratified bond he knows, and knowing quails not.  
Then as the doubtful ray that first reveals

Through cloudy bars where evening's starry Queen  
Guides to the Western marge her downward wheels,  
A form of maiden beauty, lovelier seen

Than she of Ida's guests the loveliest, stood  
First dim, then clear defined those shapes between.  
Loose her ungirded robe and loose the snood

Dropped from her ebon hair ; unsandalled shone  
Her ivory feet, but stained with bruise and blood.  
But she on him she loved intent alone

Of all beside regardless showed, secure  
Him her sole lord, come life, come death, to own.  
On her his eyes were bent ; one radiance pure

Encircling wrapped them round ; of others told  
Not even remembrance might in count endure.  
I saw and knew the twain in stories old,

The chronicled love, the ambushed hate, the knife,  
Th' envenomed wound, the kiss by love made bold  
In poison's deadliest spite ; till herited strife

Found in their grave its tomb ; and love's despair  
To sad Bologna concord gave and life.  
Imelda ! Bonifazio !<sup>1</sup> loveliest pair

And best of loved Hesperia ; who the tale  
Knows not ? who owns not in their woes a share ?

The lovers breathe their tale into my heart—The  
treacherous wounds which murdered him—Her  
faithfulness through violence and poison.

Then as dark copse, dull plain, and heath-brown hill  
By sudden sunlight touched, in green and gold  
To beauty turn, so to th' all-healing Will  
Responsive flashed a ray that fold on fold

<sup>1</sup> Unidentified, after a search through the contents of several hundred *Novelle*.

Infinite depths revealed of happiness  
By mortal eyes unseen, to ears untold.  
And all earth knows of joy to this was less  
Than to an Alp a sand-grain ; all delight  
With this compared were pain, all bliss distress.  
And more I saw but tell not, lest the sight,  
Like the rash huntsman's of Cyllene's grove,<sup>1</sup>  
Be to th' unworthy blindness ; veiled in light  
Thou with thy hid ones dwell'st, triumphant Love.

<sup>1</sup> Teiresias, blinded for an indiscreet glance at Athena.

## CANTO V

Memories of English scenery and of youth return—Earthly Love now appears as my leader ; he enumerates various classes of his subjects, until for a space I fall under his influence—My true Guide resumes his sway, the other paying him homage—A mystical vision, wherein Love and I are blended in my Guide—As a central Form, Eternal Love is now seen, in whom all lives are ultimately absorbed.

MEADOWS, my childhood's Eden ! hedge-row flowers  
Costlier esteemed than gems ! green copse and tree  
Shelter and dream-land of my noontide hours,  
What breadths of various land, what wastes of sea  
Have from my present sundered yours ! and how  
After long absence would your greeting be !  
Better apart abide ; in memory's Now

Remains unchanged the self of things ; her art  
O'er your wan semblance spreads youth's golden glow.  
But ah ! the life that in those scenes had part,

The form, the voice, the clasping hand, the smile,  
The warmth, the answering beat of heart to heart,  
Memory ! canst thou restore ; dead things awhile

Canst thou re-clothe in freshness ? and to Spring  
Winter's lone frost, hoar age to youth beguile ?

Not thus, though great thy power ; the years that bring,  
Take what they brought, and more ; the swallows' flight

Speeds their departing, spreads no homeward wing.  
Such thoughts were mine when passed, effaced in light

Those loveliest forms and fairest, and alone  
I stood, like one by sight deprived of sight,  
Darkling awhile, till slow returning shone

On my dazed eyes the daylight dawned anew  
As on a traveller in a land unknown.  
Peaceful before me lay outstretched in view

A garden trim with flowers, the Northern clime  
Such as attest in varied scent and hue ;  
And tufts of greenest grass inwoven with thyme

And hollows cowslip-marged, and clematis hoar  
On mossy banks, fair England's village pride,—  
Not given to other lands, though vaunted more

In flower or fruit, forest or field, and clad  
With all the sun-traced zone's perennial store.  
Dear land, dear fields, dear flowers, to me, though sad

With memories of far years, when dawning life  
Was dawning love, now dim with tears, now glad  
With joys half real, half fancied, peace with strife

Alternate, strength with weakness, so the hours  
Unreckoned passed, with squandered offerings rife.

Earthly Love now stands by me, disguised as a pilgrim,  
and looks on me with blame but more pity—He  
tells me I am no longer his servant, and then  
describes the varying nature and fortune of his  
slave-warriors ; each according to his deeds and  
sufferings has fit award.

“ And it and they are mine, in me begun,  
Ended in me, since the first Eastern team  
Gave to a tenantless earth a new-orbed sun.  
Till like a tale rehearsed, a morning dream

From memory rased, the separate drops of life  
Merge in the fullness of my widening stream.



“And lover, loved, friend, brother, sister, wife,  
All names, all forms of love, in me have rest  
From a world's wrong, and vain opinion's strife.”

The charm of sensuous law, the unrest of mortal love  
and hate, fall on me for a moment.

Then broke self-snapped the spell ; to wakening mind  
Restored around I gazed, in manlier plight,  
On those first aims intent, as a brisk wind  
Scatters a marsh-born fog ; for there in sight  
Stood my true Guide, long absent ; calm but stern  
His look, as steadfast burns the watch-tower's light  
That warns of danger nigh, when seethe and churn  
O'er the jagged rocks the waves ; so, 'mid the shade  
Of that dim realm his face might I discern.

Before him pales Earthly Love, who gives me over to  
the true Guide—In him Love and I are now both  
merged in a mystical trance and vision.

As wax by wax impressed fresh imagery  
Holds and retains, so to Thy likeness grew  
Whate'er was love's in love, or mine in me,

Whilst thus blended in one pure light, as chords in one  
strain of music.

As he, the God-loved man who, bowed and grey,  
By Patmos' low-reefed shore beheld where stood  
An angel shape midmost the orb of day,  
So 'mid the life-giving splendours of the flood  
That wrapped us round, central a Form I saw  
That to itself all form, all life, subdued,  
Or mine or theirs, linked in eternal law

Life's love, eternity's love ; and all beside  
As one vast circle to this centre draw.

Here stayed the vision's range, as stays the tide

By its own weight restrained ; more to behold  
Had blindness wrought, or memory's act denied.

And thou, my friend, to whom the tale is told,

Enquire not now for more ; content to know  
How Love,—though years be young or years be old,  
In starry heights, or air, or earth below,

And countless lives and countless selves that aye  
Like sparks from the great furnace pass and go,—

One with itself, with these abides, its ray

Alike on dale or hill ; true guidance set  
To the sure goal, though chance the path astray.

If more thou know'st be wary, nor forget

Him, the rash searcher of Cithaeron's grove<sup>1</sup>

Made wise too late for pardon ; folded yet

The doors, forbid the inmost shrine of Love.

<sup>1</sup> Actaeon.

## CANTO VI

As I waken from the swoon that follows the vision, Venus appears  
—She speaks ; but a chill wind withers her beauty—I find  
myself in a dark wood, where Tannhauser sits—We speak  
together, till a cry is heard ; he answers it, and offers to tell  
me his tale of despair.

THE hour that least of shade, of stillness most  
Allots, now halved the dial, nor yet the day  
'Twixt East and West his medial line had crost,  
When phantom shapes of power, so stories say,  
And sounds articulate heard, though spokesman there  
Be none, by copse or lone hill-side dismay ;  
Then chief when earth poised 'twixt the Delian pair<sup>1</sup>  
In doubtful balance hangs, and neutral held  
Lies to her spirit lords passive and bare.  
But I whose sight by the great vision quelled  
Awhile had passed to darkness, as in death  
Abode, from th' outer sense of things repelled.  
Then from the blackness of some chasm beneath  
As earth-born vapours rise, upgathering slow  
To definite shapes, then loose the woven wreath,  
Again they come, again they pass and go,  
Till shaped in steady likeness they pourtray  
The secrets questioned of the gulf below :—

<sup>1</sup> Apollo and Artemis.

Even so from that deep slumber, of the clay

That clogged me yet the due, a flickering gleam  
Of things half shaped half shapeless found its way.  
Then from the mass confused, so showed my dream,

A perfect form attuned to perfect grace  
Dawned, as on night's drear rack the daystar's beam.  
A woman's form it seemed, a woman's face,

But both divine, as from the Aegaeon spray  
Goddess and queen, she of the Titan race  
Uprose the last, the fairest ; long her sway

O'er earth, as Jove's o'er heaven, supreme confessed,  
Till paled to Bethlehem's star the Hellene ray.  
And, "I am she," such were her words expressed

By sounds more sweet than harp or lyre, "who long  
Throned in each mortal, each immortal breast.  
All joys, all passions, all delights that throng

Life's ever-varying path from youth to age,  
By me are given, to me of right belong.  
Blank and unlovely without me the page

Of earth's recorded day ; the living springs  
Are mine alone that man's great thirst assuage.  
And high and low, priests, warriors, statesmen, kings,

The churl who tills the ground, the lord who owns,  
And he who weeps, and he who joys and sings  
To me attune their chaunts, to me their moans.

Who knows not me nought worthful knows, or has,  
Though crowned with all earth's crowns, throned on all  
thrones."

As birds in summer boughs or streams in grass

Sweet melody make nor cease, so to my ear  
Her words, nor might the notes from memory pass.  
Nor unbeyed the call ; till sudden fear

Fell on me while I listening stood ; for there  
Like the chill breath that speaks the iceberg near  
To the ill-destined ship, in numb despair

The seamen bide their fate, as onward borne

Through the dense mist to frozen death they fare,  
Even such a chill, so icy, so forlorn,

'Twixt her and me was breathed ; but whence the  
blast

I knew not, cold as death and keen as scorn.

O'er that fair face, those godlike limbs it passed,

To furrowed age upwithering all ; a sight  
That with mere horror made love's self aghast,  
And passion changed to loathing ; with affright

Mingling, till broke my dream, though yet my thought  
Flickered, like eyes confused with changing light.

Upstarting round I gazed, but vainly sought

What might assurance bring, for all around  
Was strange and new to sight and hearing wrought.

Grey rocks on either side, and damp the ground

Beneath with a hid stream, and high before  
Uprose a mount with serried pine-trees crowned.

With thick-fallen leaves and matted grass the floor

Was dense, and dense above th' o'er-branching grove  
Hemmed in by crags half-seen and precipice hoar.

Nor beam of noontide sun nor stars above

Might pierce that close-laced veil of sullen green  
By the tall trees in wildered foliage wove.

Such the dark dell where plucked the Colchian Queen <sup>1</sup>

Herbs better left unsought ; in such a glade  
Outwears the Cambrian seer his spell-bound teen.<sup>2</sup>

But other likeness his whom here in shade

Of the sad copse with his own gloom combined  
Pensive I saw, in knightly garb arrayed.

Bowed on his knees his low-drooped head reclined ;

Hid was his face ; but grief, most to despair  
Akin, no less on every limb was signed.

"Or man, or spirit, or phantom-shape, whate'er

Thou sitt'st, the guardian of this loneliness,  
If outward semblance right thy state declare ;

<sup>1</sup> Medea.

<sup>2</sup> Merlin.

“ Whose portion, say, this region? what access  
Leads up the mountain barrier? by what name  
Thee shall I call? how soothe thy grief's excess?”  
Thus I; but he like one made mute by shame  
Remained, or imaged rock that bides unmoved  
The passer's questioning glance, itself the same.  
Again I spoke: “ By all in memory proved  
Life's best or worst allotment, by whate'er  
Most thou hast mourned, most cherished, dearest loved,  
Scorn not my words, but answer; heaviest care  
Is lighter made by speech; the spirit's load  
That single strength o'erburdens two may share.”  
“ How to these depths thou cam'st, or who the road  
Gave to thy feet I know not;” so the form  
Replied, nor raised his head, nor look bestowed:  
“ But if as sounds thy voice the life-blood warm  
Yet fills thy veins, be warned in time, as those  
Who in dark skies forecast the nearing storm.  
Ah me! by seeming calm beguiled I chose  
The blackness of that storm, whose drops are tears,  
Passion its lightnings, black despair its close.”  
Here ceased his speech; like one who, curious, nears  
Some cave's dim entrance, where the dusty trace  
Of wolf or bear impressed the token bears,  
Cautious he ventures on the unknown space  
Of inner darkness; fear and quick desire  
Contending in his mind hold equal place;  
Even so was I distraught, or to retire  
From quest of perilous lore, or undeterred  
By those dark words, the utmost scope t' enquire.  
Thus while I doubtful paused, at distance heard  
A sound of plaint that solace craved, yet ill  
Hoped, so it seemed, to find, the silence stirred.  
Twice shrilled that piteous cry, then all was still  
In the dark vale, save where by wind unshaken  
Swayed the dense pine-grove of th' opposing hill.

A voice it seemed of one who loved forsaken

By one beloved, and from all succour lone  
By anguish throes or pangs of death o'ertaken.  
But he, that crouching shape, than whom the stone

On which he sat, till then more lifelike seemed,  
Rose, quick responsive to the summon's moan.  
I marked by grief not age his features seamed

With lines unmeet, and haggard pale his cheek  
By matted hair deformed, and tears o'erstreamed.  
But in his eyes such fire as on the peak

Of Cotopaxi burns, when the red glare  
Hell-kindled pale heaven's lightning shows and weak.  
And loud he cried, "O Love beyond compare

Loving and loved and loveliest ! is thy pain  
Hopeless as mine ? as mine thy heart's despair ?  
O death that will not die ! O heavy chain

That binds us yet unites not ; is there grief  
As mine ? as thine ?—and both endured in vain."  
Then thus to me ; "Who suffers, small relief

Finds in recounted sorrows ; scant delight  
Is theirs who crown them with the shrivelled leaf.  
Yet by the Power constrained that wills aright

Whate'er it wills, though balm of healing none  
Be to my wounds, nor to my darkness light,  
For thee, who to these realms hast passage won

Not by thy skill but his, will I declare  
The doom of many, imaged forth in one.  
Not for my feet alone was spread the snare,

For thee, for them prepared ; the iron net  
Caged on my flutterings, countless prisoners share.  
But I from all most wretched chosen and set

Beacon and warning sign ; the hill, the grove  
Thou seest of her once goddess known, and yet  
Godlike though fallen, the Venus Queen of Love."

## CANTO VII

Tannhauser relates his well-known story—His lustful youth—The summons to the mountain of Venus (whereof the spiritual counterpart is before me)—The joy and the misery for uncounted years—My guide promises him oblivion of the past and ultimate restoration to real happiness.



## CANTO VIII

Tannhauser's tale continued—Sleeping in the Venus-bower, a spectre crowd of fellow-sinners addresses him—He wakes within a tomb, the vampire-corpse of Venus by him, and horrid visions of Sin around :—

“ BUT in those eyes with which heaven's starry fire  
Might ill compare, an evil radiance glowed  
As the night-flame o'er-flickering swamp and mire,  
Where by black depths begirt the treacherous road  
Leads to belated death ; such ending have  
Trust on illusion, love on sense bestowed.

And all around, as in a rock-hewn grave  
Shapes of corruption bred, and noisome things  
Fled through the gloom, or clustered in the cave.

All forms misformed, all foul imaginings  
Confused were gathered there ; a spectre crew,  
Harpies and Gorgons, vulture beaks and wings.

There, 'mid those phantom masks, distinct I knew  
Ill thoughts of aspect foul, and deeds of blame,  
And vain regrets, and cares of pallid hue ;

And vile reproach, and want, and blinking shame,  
And secret guilt, and manifest infamy ;  
Lost time, lost love, lost life, lost hope, lost name.”

But he cannot yet leave her—He swoons, and wanders in misery  
over the world—My guide teaches the moral of his story.

## CANTO IX

Circling the Mountain, we traverse a blood-stained way, and meet  
infinite fantastic shapes of illusion, led by Anteros-Lust and  
Fancy, followed by a crowd of their victims—At a trumpet-  
call every monstrous form of evil, and Venus herself, go by—  
My guide announces the final purgation of these sinners.

As who from lazar haunts and beds of pain,  
Powerless to soothe or cure, to th' open door  
With gladness turns, of air and freedom fain,  
From that dank glade we passed ; the way before

Circled the mount ill-famed ; the silent wood  
Like cloistered walls close-vaulted arched us o'er.  
With russet leaves and shivered twigs bestrewed

A narrow path we trod, and all the way  
Was crimson-stained and foul with mire and blood.  
Then marked I where by the hill-side the day

Was densest curtained off, a purple brook  
As from death-wounded limbs trickled away.  
Deep loathing seized my thought ; with horror shook

My limbs ; my feet refused in that foul stain  
To wade, my eyes on its red trail to look.

Paused too my guide, as whom in doubt detain

Things yet unseen but near ; on mine his hand  
Was laid, in sign of timely warning fain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fain*, eager.

Then, as at summons of the choral wand

By scenic sorcerer waved, in semblant rage  
Swayed by th' orchestra's swell, a motley band  
As sylphs or demons dight, the resonant stage

With mimic war invade ; now high now low  
Pennons with pennons, swords with swords engage ;—  
So from that evil marsh of crimson dye

Infinite shapes, fantastic most and new,  
In motley groups upgathering passed us nigh.  
I marked, and saw where foremost ranged in view

With changeful colours gay that mocked the sight  
A leader Form headed that motley crew.

Like one half mad, or ill with wine bedight,

Amazed he trod ; on all around was cast  
His look, yet fixed on none his lust's delight.  
Beside his way thin hopes, regretful past,

Vain longings, causeless joys, heart's emptiness,  
Flew wild as leaves whirled by November's blast.  
Nor name nor sign he bore ; yet none the less

Him that ill power I knew, Love's twin-born foe,<sup>1</sup>  
Who curses most where most he seems to bless ;  
As shadow cleaves to light, ebb follows flow,

Night tracks the day, death life ; where flourish most  
Health-breathing herbs, earth's subtlest poisons grow.  
Him next, or side by side, of that bad host

Second in might and headship, Fancy vain,  
Pander of ill, the left-hand pathway crossed.  
On a strange beast,<sup>2</sup> that Lycia's threefold bane

Or seemed, or was, he rode ; a coloured glass  
Of unreal hues in ever-flickering stain  
Aloft he held ; his tread beneath the grass

To flowers was turned, to gems the flowers ; but all  
Were fleeting false, as dreams that please and pass.  
Followed on these such crowd as to the call

Of music loud and clamour throngs the ways

<sup>1</sup> Lust as Anteros.

<sup>2</sup> Chimaera.

Of popular mask or pageant festival.

With necks outstretched and eager eyes they gaze

As each to each a marvel grown ; so these

Leading or led revolved in Fancy's maze.

And in hot suns as restless swarm the bees

Where summer hives are ranged ; in angry chase

Now here now there they come, they go, nor cease ;

So restless these, as of their own disgrace

Eager, of sensuous Love and Fancy bred,

Followed th' incestuous authors of their race.

Last following went, to harmful venture led,

A pale disfeatured crowd, the fools of time,

By time bemocked as living, scorned when dead.

'Mid these, grieving, I saw life's fairest prime

Cankered at heart by that dark power, whose skill

Is man's decay, life's ruin, Nature's crime.

Not long ; for from the depths of that dark hill,

By the wayside, I heard a clanging blast

Trumpet-like blown, in threatening notes and shrill.

And to that summoning call obedient passed

Across the field such monstrous forms and dread

That memory's self even now recoils aghast.

For there of Lerna's pest the sevenfold head

Living, yet cleft I saw ; the Furies there,

Medusa's snakes, and Harpy wings outspread ;

And linked with these wan sorrow, gnawing care,

Wasting disease, foul shame, lone poverty,

And late repentance vain, and stark despair.

And ancient hate to murder kin went by,

And treason masked in smiles, and rancour fell,

And ugly death, and after infamy ;

All that of direst wrong old stories tell ;

All horrid shapes, all foulest agonies,

All worst essayed on earth or dreamed in hell,

With nameless deeds and things that hand denies

To write or tongue to tell, with these I saw,

Till sick my heart with faintness, seared my eyes.  
Yet by my guide upheld, and the great awe

Of that old daemon power, whose might dischained  
Before us passed, no step might I withdraw.  
Then midmost these, nor sullied more nor stained

Than by dark clouds the moon, that beauty shone,  
Of mortal men the bliss, the curse, ordained.  
As through Thaumantia's<sup>1</sup> many-coloured zone

Sun-drawn on slanted rainfall, plain and field  
Glitter in that gay gauze across them thrown.  
So all that motley concourse unconcealed

In Venus' self I saw, th' ensnared, the snare,  
And the great canker of earth's rose revealed.  
Then with the rest she vanished ; mirk the air

Hung o'er the forest track ; nor shape nor aught  
But the sad trees and silent mount was there.  
While thus my brother-guide ; "The doctrine taught

Forget not thou, nor deem the pageant vain  
To thy roused sense in visioned semblance brought.  
Know then as to her nest the bird again

From furthest flight returns, as heat from fire,  
Harvest from seed, from full-charged clouds the rain,  
Each true to each,—such sequence ill desire

Finds to its aim or makes ; the banded shaft  
Flies to its mark, nor lower strikes nor higher.  
And nature's primal bounds nor force nor craft

May move or overpass ; his little sail  
Man sets at will ; the breezes hers that waft.  
Nor may his bark the happy isles avail

To reach who reckless steers ; nor his to shun  
The barrier reefs, though favouring breathe the gale.  
And more ; What flowers, what fruits, the glorious sun

Looks on are healthful found ; but poisonous those  
Sprouted of sunless mould and shadows dun.  
Sweet the tall lily's whiteness, sweet the rose

<sup>1</sup> Iris, the rainbow.

“Unfold them to the day ; from vaporous night  
Her hemlock growths the Cretan sorceress<sup>1</sup> chose.  
So in man’s heart, life’s garden, earth’s delight,

All pleasant things in form, and scent, and hue,  
In Truth’s white radiance steeped their rays unite ;  
Pure thoughts, high deeds, glad utterance, purpose true,  
Whate’er of best heaven circles, earth allows,  
Or th’ interlustral state transforms anew.

With quickening dews are drenched that garden’s boughs  
Rained from th’ eternal dawn ; the thorns to flowers  
Are changed, bright chaplets of immortal brows.  
But other doom is his whom the dark powers

Of ill, th’ invisible worm, has found, and made  
Haunt of his breast in youth’s ill-guarded hours.  
There things mis-shaped, in fair disguise arrayed,

Misplaced desires, ill thoughts, and deeds unclean,  
The toadstool growth of falsehood’s fostering shade.  
Those worst whom here or there the sorceress-Queen

Claims for her own, and in th’ accursed hill  
Prisoners detains, in torment-joys obscene.  
Yet these of error more than purposed ill

Victims or slaves, shall the great morn deliver  
By suffering cleansed from stain ; th’ eternal Will  
That life not death decrees, of life the giver,

Pitying such end ordains, while onward move  
Helmless, yet steered, the wrecks down the great river  
To the far goal, the lustral calm of Love.”

<sup>1</sup> Medea of *Colchis* is apparently intended.

## CANTO X

We pass into a clear landscape : a Star glitters before us—Here are the true and honourable votaries of Love and Friendship—We meet a common soldier who slew himself after the Emperor Otho's defeat at Brescia ; he tells his story, and explains the ethics of wrong and rightful suicide.

I return with joy from those dark woods to open earth and skies and a fair flowery landscape : a brilliant light points our track ; I ask its meaning of my guide :—

THEN he ; “Of ill desire and vain pretence

Of the world's passing show, who, free from stain  
Have to true love subdued the partial sense,  
Here find their just abode ; pleasure nor pain

Of earth can touch them more ; secure they wait  
The life eterne, porch of Love's inmost fane.  
And faithful consorts here by envious fate

Asunder torn in life, in death united  
Taste of love's vine the clusters sweet though late.  
And who through wintry storms the friendship, plighted

In pleasant days of spring, maintained ; and who  
Have truth with truth even to the end requited.  
And equal made with these in honour due

Brothers in deed as kin ; no worthier band

"Than. theirs is called in all that glorious crew.  
And, ranked with these, who to their lord's command

Freely could all resign ; who lived and died  
Not to their own but to their chieftain's hand."  
Even as he spoke our onward path beside

One I beheld close stepping pace for pace,  
As to our way companion given or guide.  
Unknown to me the garb, unknown the face,

Yet not unwelcome there nor strange, but seemed  
For happy ends sent from some happy place.  
Crested the helm, and bright the armour gleamed

That clad the vigorous limbs ; yet who beheld  
Herald of peace, not war, that form had deemed.

I ask who he is ; he replies that his name is of no  
consequence :

"Unmarked of men to live, unmourned to die  
Was all I asked or gained, content to know

Sealed in my blood love's immortality.  
More would'st thou learn ? then hear ; When Brescia's  
snow

With Roman blood by Romans shed distained,  
Bade Rome's eighth emperor hope and life forgo,  
Nor to Rome's laurelled champion aught remained  
But for his Rome to die, so fate's decree

Of secular crime the just award ordained,—  
As on some jutting cliff the wintry sea

Tumultuous breaks ; unmoved the waves among  
Bides the black rock till night and tempest flee,—  
Pontiff and victim made of secular wrong

So, Otho ! stood'st thou then ; while in mad mood  
Before, around thee surged the warrior throng,  
Scarce scaped the carnage field ; with dust and blood  
Their armour foul, their banners soiled and torn,  
Like hunted wolves at desperate bay they stood.



" 'Vengeance or death,' their cry ; ' no second morn,  
Dishonoured, ours to see ; nor Nero's heir,

Rome's choice, shall basely veil to German scorn.'  
But he, ' Not mine Hesperia's crown to wear  
Wet with Hesperia's tears ; not mine to climb

Slippery with Roman blood th' Imperial stair.  
Enough the carnage past ; to future time  
'Mid Rome's great memories stored, be Otho's death

Found the atonement of sad Otho's crime.'  
Thus he ; with staring eyes and in-drawn breath  
We heard the self-spoke doom, like men forsook,

Nor hope from gods above, nor fiends beneath ;  
Each gazed on each ; each in the other's look  
Saw but his own re-imaged ; each his name

Charactered read in black dishonour's book.  
Yet none replied or spoke, where all of blame  
Conscious and foul defeat ; nor sign nor word

Found to effacement of remembered shame.  
But I, to whom the voice of my dear lord  
As fuel was to flame, from the mid throng

Stood forth, sole spokesman of the warrior horde ;  
And thus ; ' Of civic rights or popular wrong  
Not mine to know nor reck ; alone thy will

For law we own ; to it, to thee belong.  
Ready for thee to save, for thee to spill  
Or others' blood or ours ; our plighted vow

Thus we maintain, thus what we vouched fulfil.'"  
No more he spoke ; as summer morn a glow  
Suffused his face ; then with a smile he bared  
Midmost his breast the love-approving blow.

My guide teaches the doctrine of wrongful and justifiable  
suicide.

## CANTO XI

The City of True Love rewarded—Some among a vast crowd of the faithful excel in rosy light—These, the soldier explains, are heroic souls.—Theseus appears, and tells of his life and journey to Hell with Peirithous.

We pass the plain rapidly, and reach the gate of the  
City of True Love rewarded.

“ONE love, one faith, one victor-wreath they own,”  
Thus spoke my guide, “though ranged in three-fold  
sign

The bannered guardians of the Master’s throne.

But the pure whiteness of the foremost line

Is perfect love’s ; the red, love’s martyr-palm ;  
Golden the rest in faith inviolate shine.

From lands of snow-strewn fir, or vine, or palm,

Cold North or genial South ; from where the bay

Darkens to Calpe’s frown, to the great calm

Where from a waveless ocean dawns the day,

Comrades and kin they join, whose high disdain  
Of earth disclosed to life the excellent way.

With those as men they served in equal pain,

Equal in glory now ; lovers and loved  
Lords of one realm till the great end they reign.  
The crimson ensign theirs, the sign approved

“Of life-blood given for love, from rash reproof  
And partial blame by righteous meed removed.”  
I looked ; from the near gate to where aloof

Outstretched the city walls, in flickering fires  
Frequent the pennons gleamed from roof to roof.  
As when slow drawn in ever-narrowing spires

Led by the Scorpion sign, from Northern day  
To the lone South compelled day's lamp retires,  
O'er icy depths of night in ceaseless play

Now dazzling white, now green, now crimson red  
At will the Polar witch-fires pass or stay,  
Such was the flickering show ; while with slow tread

And watchful eyes intent the gates of gold  
Joyous I passed, by love's sure guidance led.  
O happy gates, set to love's central fold !

O happy fold, love's guarded citadel !  
Thrice happy flock, love's first-fruits here enrolled !  
But thou, my being's stay, my guide, if well

I thy behest have heard, and heard obeyed,  
Give me in worthy verse the things to tell  
By thee revealed, lest the prevailing shade

Of earth's exile, where from that glorious throng  
Banished awhile I mourn, these lines invade.  
Then where we passed the crowded streets along

And all were fair, all bright, I marked in view  
Brighter and fairer some their peers among.  
So have I seen, thick drenched in Syrian dew

By old Damascus' walls, with livelier glow  
Some rose outbrave the rest in perfect hue.

The Roman soldier explains that such are those who  
kept faith to death, and were equal friends—The  
elect of Love in all ages come forward.

Scarce had his words their close, ere to the spot  
Where paused our steps, two forms than whom more fair

Myron or greater Phidias sculptured not,  
Drew nigh ; ruddy the one, his clustered hair  
Like sunbright ripples crisp ; a lion's hide  
Girt his strong limbs, unvestured else and bare.  
Of darker hue and slenderer form beside,  
Yet kinglike trode his comrade ; a sad smile  
Told of o'ermastered toil and ills defied.

Theseus shortly narrates his exploits ; his journey to  
Hades in hope to release his friend Peirithous ;  
their deliverance by the Supreme Power.

## CANTO XII

My guide names other heroic friends—A smile from Infinite Love  
in finite Form entrances me—Many more go before us, until  
the light of Supreme Love strikes down and blinds me.

My guide enumerates other hero-friends : amongst them  
Patroclus and Achilles ; Harmodius and his brother ;  
Orestes and Pylades ; Nisus and Euryalus. The  
souls pass by : a glance from one, described as  
“ Infinite Love in finite Form,” wholly entrances me.  
Then again I see the city streets, peopled by more  
happy souls : Ceyx and Alcyone :—My guide names  
Admetus and Alcestis ; Arria, and another Roman  
not specified ; then continues :

“ WELL fares the land where the dear name of home  
Honoured, all else upholds ; less firm beside  
All other bond than ocean's drifted foam.  
But happiest those in whom impressed abide  
The seals of that high bond by heaven assigned  
To the clasped hands of bridegroom pledged with bride !  
The five-fold links that to their birth-place bind  
Nations, to parents children, kin to kin,  
Rulers with ruled, and friends with friends entwined ;  
These knit th' enduring good ; in these begin,  
In these their fullness find, in these remain,

“Who the true life from change and death would win.

O happy they, thrice blest, whom science vain,

Nor pomp of idle show, nor restless pride  
In change insatiate masked, nor greed of gain,  
Nor vain conceit, to folly match and guide,

Nor license rash, nor scorn of wiser eld  
From Nature's ways and Love's have drawn aside.”  
Thus while he spoke, of sudden I beheld

What seemed of infinite peace the chos'n abode  
In a fair land by joy and pleasaunce held.

And as the place in beauty, they who trode

That happy ground, their own : nor anxious care  
Nor discontent was theirs, nor changeful mood ;  
But rest secure of garnered treasures heir

Reigned o'er the quiet land, and ordered calm,  
And life in love, and love in life was there.

This Nature's goal and purpose, this the palm

Of truth o'er semblance gained, the prize, the crown,  
Of earth's sore wounds last healing found and balm.

Absolute light veiled in darkness now comes down from  
the throne of supreme Love with entrancing power.

## CANTO XIII

Waking, my guide bears me far away to a sea-shore—Here the Lustral Powers bide in their great Present, the mystery whereof human speech cannot tell—My guide now appears as a human Brother, announces that I have passed the perilous strait of my way, have made the true choice, and may go on further—All that I have seen returns to view : I recognize my spectral self ; my follies of youth—My guide desires me to forget the past : all are inevitably subjects of Love, but after their nature bear his mark for good or evil, and meet their reward as predestined—The seven-fold Symbols reappear, with a glorious vision foreshadowing their ultimate repose who rise above things of sense.

The trance passes :

AND now I felt, yet felt not, through the air  
Borne in resistless swoop, as when their prey  
From field or fold strong-pinioned eagles bear.  
Till far behind fair land and city lay  
To sight not memory lost ; and now we staid  
By the lone margin of a salt-sea bay.  
Nor flashing oar nor sail were there displayed,  
But the green desert of a fathomless deep  
And the low shore-cliff's narrow line of shade.

My guide lays me down to sleep.

By this the morn

Had grown to noon, if morn and noon might be  
Where never twilight died nor day was born.  
Nor ever moon across that tideless sea

Her silver pathway drew, nor sequent hours  
Traced in those skies diurnal registry ;  
Nor season here, nor throned in Zodiac bowers

A monarch sun ; but self-contained and sure  
Bides the great Present of the Lustral Powers.

The mystery of these is unutterable—I wake by the  
sea-side : a human form is by me,

a human voice

Attuned to love the lordship of command,  
And thus the words were borne ; “ Brother, rejoice ;

Past is the perilous strait ; ’twixt false and true  
Tinsel and gold, made thy determinate choice ;  
Henceforth with strength restored and courage new

Be thine with me the onward path t’ explore,  
Where through strange mazes guides the heaven-lent  
clue.”

Thus while he spoke, all heard or seen before,

But most th’ enchantments of the wide domain  
Where Proteus Love his empire holds, once more  
In clear reflex I saw ; the bliss, the pain,

But as far off, I felt, and ’mid the herd  
My spectre knew, twined in th’ enchanter’s chain.  
And faint and far the Siren notes I heard

That erst had power to wile, an echo weak  
Of foolish joys, by wise oblivion blurred.

And with hot touch of shame I felt my cheek

Suffused, that e’er such toys my steps had led  
Substance in dreams and life in death to seek.

My guide tells me to quit thoughts of the past—All



beings are slaves to love, for good or for evil ; all  
come to diverse homes "in the intermediate shade,"  
as "prejudged eternally."

Thus while he spoke, as in the silvered glass  
Form answers form, shade shade, before me rose  
The seven-fold guardians of that entrance pass ;  
The banner waved, the proffered crown, the rose  
Dewy with beauty's gems, the phantom shape  
Swathed in the gloom of undistinguished woes.  
These and th' associate forms that o'er the cape  
Of limiting earth's last range where erst I stood,  
Mocking alike attainment or escape,  
Again before me ranged ; again my blood  
Alternate chilled and glowed ; again the tone  
Of a dread voice its warning note renewed.  
While further yet, as 'yond th' horizon zone,  
By rays oblique, reflex in present view  
Of things unseen the semblant form is shewn,  
False in itself, yet in presentment true,  
So showed those heights beyond, a vision fair  
Limned and enamelled on the infinite blue.  
High walls, and domes, and towers were imaged there  
Of stainless marble wrought, with jewelry  
Inlaid, and golden spires, and sculpture rare ;  
And much I knew, yet knew not all ; the eye  
Uncertain made and doubtful part, confessed  
Something that roused yet baffled memory.

These things, the guide tells, are the image and fore-  
taste of the true kingdom, where—

With folded wings  
There long desire has rest, no more to move,  
By its own fullness stilled ; all separate things  
Blent in the one, the folding orb of Love."

## CANTO XIV

The vision passes—We track the shore till stopped by a fiery stream—My guide explains that the next kingdom is ruled by a Sorceress-Phantom—We enter a gloomy mist, filled with sad sounds.

STAY, stay, thou glorious vision ! or bid me fade  
With thee to farthest depths, nor leave me lone  
By hope deferred to faint despair betrayed !  
Such was my cry ; with tenfold lustre shone  
A flash, no more ; then closed th' unmeaning blue  
Recordless, voiceless, o'er the glory gone.  
But from th' horizon of my memoried view

The vision passed not ; pictured there it glowed  
In its own light ; while hope and courage new  
Through every limb with renovate fullness flowed ;

So to my guide I turned, and hand in hand  
Silent a space our onward path we trode  
By the cool margin of the wave-beat sand,  
Till by a stream debarred, whose wondrous flow  
Closed from our hoped access the farther strand.  
As from the depths of Aetna's Titan glow

The fire-flood bursts, its burning breath denies  
Passage above, its liquid flame below ;  
Such was the barrier here ; in mere surprise

Helpless I stood, and sought with outstretched palm  
Shelter to my scorched face and blinded eyes.

Terrified by the fiery flood, I am assured by my guide  
of unseen heavenly aid ; he discourses on our pil-  
grimage under shelter of a rock.

“Thou know'st the life in mortal courses pent  
A sevenfold way pursues, as each, from birth,  
Or custom's force, or chance, has ta'en the bent.  
Ambition, Art, Love, Science, Sensuous Mirth,

Creative Thought, Religion's Empery,  
Beacons or bale-fires of the sons of earth.  
Each in this penance-realm by just decree

Lustration finds or meed, till ultimate doom  
By long endurance set each prisoner free.  
Seven portals these, seven paths, but one the home,  
Their goal and thine, when to th' extremest bound  
Of th' intermediate realm thy footsteps come.  
Of the seven hills within the circuit found

Three hast thou seen, of noblest ends mista'en,  
Like precious robes trailed on the sullyng ground.  
Ambition first, high heart and honoured strain,

But marred by personal will, as summer blight  
Shrivels and taints the golden harvest grain.  
And next, heaven's gift, earth's treasure, man's delight,

The painter's, sculptor's art, to common things  
Too oft debased, and dwarfed by vulgar spite.  
Last, the third realm, where Love's irradiate wings

O'er darkest shades are spread, worse mixed with best,  
Dross with pure gold, and vilest slaves with kings,  
Hast thou beheld ; these on thy mind impressed

Yet fresh remain, these in the world of men  
Shall record find, in thy true verse expressed.  
Nor shalt thou see them more, nor turn again

Whence now thou cam'st, till for thy lustral need  
Thyself art made this realm's brief denizen.

All these through good's excess from perfect deed

Have erred ; but whom this chasm from those divides

“Have of defect or aim misplaced the meed.  
Therefore the power through error’s self that guides

To truth the true, has with all-purging fire  
Circled the realm where darkest stain abides.”

Then I; “Lord of my life, in whom desire

Is with fulfilment one, to whom is known  
Th’ unspoken aim to which my hopes aspire,  
Tell me what error theirs, whom the dread zone

With flame has girt, what purport foiled, or how  
Crushed in defeat their aim, or monstrous grown?”  
But he with downcast eyes and furrowed brow

Silent awhile remained, as friend by friend  
Questioned of what the tongue is loth t’ avow,  
Lest with the answer strange surprise should blend

Somewhat of doubt or pain; awhile he bides  
Silent, then slow replies; thus he; “Attend,  
Nor from the meaning swerve; the fiery tides

That front thy path, the realm inclose where pine  
Whom to this loss the Phantom-Sorceress guides.  
Ask not that Phantom’s name; in many a shrine

She dwells, by many a land, from Zembla’s coast  
To the warm heavings of the tropic brine.

This Sorceress, Superstition - Religion in the widest  
sense of the word—unites gentleness and ferocity,  
pride and humility, good and evil.

Lifter of every veil; of every creed

She holds what seems the key, the mystery  
Hid from all eyes, the page that none may read.

O grave of countless slain! O fathomless sea

Insatiate most when smoothest spread! who most  
Thy promise trust, the most beguiled by thee.”

Sudden from speech he paused; for now the coast

Where stayed our steps, and all the sea between  
And the near crags in misty shade were lost.

As when the sun-scorched plains, no longer green,  
Are wrapped in rolling smoke, when reckless play  
Or chance has fired the grass, so dense a screen  
Shut all around from sight ; but denser lay  
The shroud where close before in downward flood  
The guardian fire-stream sought the lonely bay.  
And evermore meseemed as there I stood  
Deepened the torrent's roar, and murkier rolled  
The smoky cloud, blotched as with crimson blood.  
And voices strange I heard, and sounds that told  
Of bitter plaint ; and ever rising higher  
Clamour and shrieks of anguish manifold.  
As when through Indian towns the wind-driven fire  
Loud crackling speeds ; with helpless cries the crowd  
Palace and hall bewails and gilded spire  
Whirled in red embers through th' unnatured cloud  
Outblotting heaven's blue vault, and evermore  
Fiercer the flame ; so wild, so fierce, so loud  
Uprose that storm's turmoil, till the firm shore  
Our feet beneath, as hollow found and frail,  
Trembled in act to sink ; behind, before  
Uncertain all and perilous ; faint and pale  
I to my guardian clung ; but he the while  
Unmoved the scene surveyed ; not Himmon's vale  
Had blanched with fear that cheek, or the calm smile,  
Seal of high deeds, bid from those lips remove,  
Or dimmed those beacon fires ; nor force nor guile  
Have o'er thy vassals power, Immortal Love.

## CANTO XV

The Fourth Kingdom—This is a phantom region, indescribable—  
We gaze on the fiery stream ; sweet music is heard, with one  
jarring note, resolved into final harmony — The landscape  
clears—In a vision a Form, seen before, returns ; this figures  
the Religions and Superstitions of the world—I am speech-  
less, and my guide bears me onward.

FROM far-off lands returned and customs strange  
Of men, and monstrous forms of beast or bird  
Unknown to native sight and homely range,  
Questioned, the traveller oft refrains, deterred  
By fear lest fact should fiction seem, and shame  
Be for due praise on spoken truth conferred.  
Such fear is mine when his command whose name  
Untold resumes my life, the wonders shown  
In the mid realm bids me in verse proclaim.  
For all was phantom here, as colours thrown  
On sunset skies of storm, or vaporous play  
That knits and swift unknits the Iris zone.  
A changeful world ; nor sequence here nor stay,  
But dream dissolving dream, and fairest show  
By foulest crossed, or mightiest by decay.  
This and what more behoved me then to know  
In words that timorous sloth and faithless fear  
Dispelled, as cloudless suns the fresh fall'n snow,

The Master taught; and more he told that here

My verse<sup>recounts</sup> not; for even then the eye  
Insatiate made as deaf my heedless ear.

Nor may the teacher's words though wisest vie

With things beheld; nor hearing's sense engrave  
Deep as sight's edge the seal of memory.

By the steep margin of that fiery wave

We stood with shaded eyes, as, upward flung  
From depths unknown or poured from viewless cave,  
Welled that dread heat; with deafened ears and  
tongue

Speechless, intent on the dread scene, of all  
Reckless beside, close to my guide I clung.

As one whom venturous search from hall to hall

Of a lone palace-wreck at eve, has led  
To a great chasm, where through the rifted wall  
Mere blackness gapes and void; with cautious dread

Downward he peers, nor to th' uncertain verge  
Adventures yet, nor moves his forward tread,  
Lest the next step be death; so me the surge

Of the wide sea, but the red fire-flood more  
Fast-bound a prisoner held, till chance emerge  
Th' expected aid heaven-pledged, strong to restore

Freedom awhile withheld; and now the stream,  
Now the hot smoke-wreaths fain I sought t' explore.  
Then as through darkest clouds a watery gleam

The storm-drenched traveller cheers, or hope deferred

Shapes in mid woes some joy-preluding dream,  
So from far distance borne, yet clear, I heard

Fitful at first, then constant blown, a strain  
Sweet as in summer's eve love's deathless bird.  
Of smiles with tears besprent it told, of pain

With pleasure woven in one, but more the pleasure;  
And rest outlasting toil, and sunshine rain.  
But evermore as through a blithesome measure

A jarring note renewed, a something there  
Told of a baffled hope, and cheated treasure.  
Then swelled the music more, till now whate'er  
Had discord been, in whelming harmony  
Was lost, as vanished notes in sunlight clear.  
And now that sulphurous gloom, that smoke-wreathed  
sky

Changed to serenest light, disclosed to view  
Extinguished fires, their channel void and dry.  
While from the far horizon's stainless blue  
Wide stretched beyond, what seemed a gathered  
flight

Of snow-white doves swift slanting towards us drew.  
Or as in April heavens a cloudlet white

By the south wind in playful dalliance swept  
Momently changing mocks the gazer's sight ;  
So was the vision seen, so swift it kept

Onwards its course, the while that music sweet  
Around its path like a lithe serpent crept.

Me too that melody's witchcraft bound ; my feet

Rooted to earth like hers<sup>1</sup> whose leafy change  
The love that wrought laments, forbade retreat.  
And nearer now revealed that vision strange

Was the cloaked phantom<sup>2</sup> of my earlier tale  
Seen 'mid the guardians of the outer range.

But now distinct the features, raised the veil

From brows of dreadful calm ; a face that seemed  
Of marble hewn, as marble hard and pale.

Her dress and ghastly appearance : her wings spread  
out over Earth : mystic symbols and attendants.

Then thus the Master's voice ; "The vision seen  
By few, to few revealed, the hope, the dread

<sup>1</sup> Daphne, changed into the laurel when flying from Phoebus.

<sup>2</sup> See Book I., Canto xi., p. 57.



"Of a sick world, without disguise or screen  
Behold in its own shape ; the sorceress wed

Not to one spouse but many ; doubtful birth,  
Of Time's twin offspring Truth and Error bred.  
Yet other garb and guise to sons of earth

Her oft presentment shows ; a charm that makes  
Of best and worst confused illusive worth.

But the higher Power that leaves not nor forsakes

Those whom eternal Love from the blind mass,  
Nations or men, to its own portion takes,  
Has to thy eyes upheld the secret glass

That true from false discerns ; so through the snare  
Spread for thy feet untangled may'st thou pass."

Thus while he spoke the phantom-haunted air

Darkened with myriad forms, that in wild dance  
Entwined, with beauty horror, foul with fair.

Strange memories rise before me :

As one whom loss of blood or hunger sore

To faintness brings, around him stares to seek  
Aught that may sense sustain or breath restore,  
So I, with mortal vesture clogged and weak,

For weakness dwells in clay, in suppliant wise  
Raised to my guide wet eyes and pallid cheek.  
And he, 'twixt whom and me veil or disguise

Was none, with half-reproachful steadfastness  
Turned on my face the sunlight of calm eyes.  
Then as a brother's arm with clinging stress

Supports the fainting boy, whose faltering tread  
And trembling limbs the frozen blood confess,  
His hands he chafes, uplifts his drooping head,

Pointing where mounds and drifted snows among  
Shows the hoped shelter of the parent shed,—  
So in that wildering hour ere yet my tongue

Had framed its prayer in words, the heedful guide

Round me his arms with timely succour flung.

And through the spectre host on either side

Parted, as prow-cleft waves when fresh the wind

Drives the full-canvassed bark, their spray divide,

Unharm'd he bore my mortal weight ; behind

The fire-stream roared anew ; in densest veil

Once more the smoke-wreaths o'er its path entwined.

Here let the verse have pause, and the strange tale

Borrow from silence rest, till I recount

Hid things made manifest in the midmost vale

Of those by pain made perfect, till th' amount

Of the just debt be paid, the sullied dove

In the pure depths of wisdom's lustral fount

Washed and made free where Life is one with Love.

## CANTO XVI

Passing through a dense wood, we are addressed by S. Anthony—  
My guide replies, and we follow him through a narrow path to  
a gloomy shrine.

FROM the sweet sorceress<sup>1</sup> of Ogygia's woods  
By timely violence freed, to the sad shore  
Cimmerian, bathed by Ocean's sunless floods,  
The Ithacan chief<sup>2</sup> by Pallas taught t' explore  
What hidden things the shadowy world in death  
From ours divided holds, and the dark lore  
Known to the conclave of the vaults beneath,—  
Profitless wisdom all, and atmosphere  
Too chill for life, too thin for human breath,  
Voices of evil purport, sights of fear,  
And earth's warm love to hatred turned, or worse,  
And the long winter of the cyclic year,—  
So sings the Samian bard;<sup>3</sup> but more his verse<sup>4</sup>  
Reveals, from the grey towers by Arno's stream  
Exiled by unjust hate and doom perverse,  
Who from Giudecca's pit to the mid beam  
Of Life's eternal sun by wisdom led  
In Love revealed the Vision all-supreme;

<sup>1</sup> Calypso.

<sup>2</sup> Ulysses.

<sup>3</sup> Homer: *Samos* perhaps put by error for *Smyrna*.

<sup>4</sup> Dante.

Who, mortal yet, on food immortal fed,  
And drank the living streams, and with the flowers  
Blossomed in highest heaven was garlanded ;  
To each such grace was given, to each the powers  
That mould or mar the moulded clay, assigned  
Part in the secret of the eternal towers.  
Yet wider range and stranger forms of kind  
To me even me displayed, this Pageant's rhyme  
Must tell, for future years in trust assigned.  
And all by childhood dreamed, to manhood's prime  
Revealed, of later years life's harvest sheaves,  
Attune the changes of the modulate chime.  
And now through a dense wood, whose pleachéd leaves  
Noon's glare to twilight made, 'mid drops that fell  
Thick as fast-melting frost from sun-smit leaves,  
But these were human tears, our way befell ;  
And evermore the sightless glades between  
Tolled the dull clangour of a smitten bell.  
Yet trackless all, so seemed, th' untrodden green  
Spread to our feet, nor less the wood denied  
Opening or guidance through the leafy screen.  
Perplexed a questioning look toward my guide  
I turned, but as in water shade to shade,  
His face to mine with equal doubt replied.  
Silent awhile we stood ; around, the glade,  
Wildered in infinite monotony,  
Search to the eye, step to the foot forbade.  
Then, as in thought who lonely sits, and nigh  
No living creature deems, suddenly near,  
No warning given, beholds a watcher nigh :  
Wondering he scans the form, the garb, in fear  
Kin to surprise, as fain to learn from these  
What may the visitant mean, what message bear.  
Such or more wonder mine, when 'mid the trees,  
Where densest closed the boughs, a sudden shape  
Came forth in quaintest guise ; no quainter sees

Naples or Rome, when stands the crowd agape  
At the processioned monstrous Carnival  
By Tiber's banks, or fair Puzzuoli's cape.

The figure, S. Anthony, asks our right of passage — My  
guide briefly describes Egyptian asceticism as the  
parent of the monastic system, with all its evils, and  
announces the authority for our pilgrimage.

Then slow upraised his beckoning hand extended  
Where through the densest grove, unmarked before,  
A sinuous path the vale's steep slope descended.  
No narrower track the panther opes, nor more  
With winding bend perplexed, nor darker shade  
In Ural's mine shrouds Scythia's buried ore.  
Till where a level plain succeeding made  
More easy way, midmost a grassy lawn  
What seemed a shrine was to our eyes displayed.

In the twilight we see a grey chapel, with domed roof  
and narrow windows : the strain of music heard by  
the fire-brook here pours forth loudly, with a sound  
of many voices, whilst worship proceeds within.

As who for bathing dight by some deep stream  
Stands at a doubtful pause, and eyes the wave  
Fearful by act his purpose to redeem,  
So by the door I stood, and the dark cave  
Mistrustful eyed, though thrice th' Egyptian grey  
With hand and voice signal of entrance gave.  
Till on my arm I felt the Master lay  
His guiding touch, as with a cheersome smile  
Scattering my coward fears he led the way.  
So hand in hand, free from enchantment's guile,  
Entering we bowed beneath the dark alcove  
Haunt of the unearthly powers, whose spells beguile  
All save the chosen few, th' elect of Love.

## CANTO XVII

We enter the chapel—On the walls are figured scenes from early Biblical history, from the Christian Church, from the Inquisition.

“WHATE’ER thou seest or hear’st of sign or word  
Silent attend and note ; to dying men  
So may thy song undying truth record.”  
Such warning fell, though whence I knew not, when  
That chapel door I passed ; the curtained shade  
That entrance gave, behind us closed again.  
Nor sculptured likeness there nor form pourtrayed  
At first I saw, so thick the incense fume  
In that half-darkness sight and sense dismayed.  
As one on whom while living yet the tomb  
By chance or crime has closed, awakening knows  
Peopled with things of death the vaulted gloom,  
Then saw I slow emerging, rows on rows,  
Figures from floor to roof, and colours blent  
Of pictured men and women, joys or woes.  
Up the mid space with pausing step we went,  
My guide and I, of the dense crowd aware  
That stood or knelt in lowliest worship bent.  
With vaporous heat and censer-smoke the air  
Scarce freedom left of breath, and blurred and faint  
With iris haloes shone the tapers there.

As on some chancel-wall or screen-work quaint,  
Where by Icenian marshes<sup>1</sup> rest the twain  
Who clothed in flesh my life, each antique saint  
Shows by long years defaced and wanton stain ;  
Yet undefaced the childish memories  
That in my heart deep-graven by love remain.  
And now to that half-night our custom'd eyes  
Attemper'd grown, could each by each behold  
Things erst confused in darkness and disguise.  
There on the left-hand wall the legend old  
Of Syrian annals writ ; a world from nought  
Fashioned, in seven brief days its work unrolled.  
There light from darkness sundered, waters brought  
To gathered seas, and all that earth of life  
Or heaven of brightness holds, in course was wrought.  
And, masked in serpent guise, the primal strife  
In Heaven begun, resumed in Eden, showed,  
And that ill-tasted tree with poison rife.

The Deluge and a few scenes recording human crime  
and misery from the Old Testament are briefly  
noticed.

Of later years the scenes I there descried  
As of a second world unlike the old,  
Fair as the new-winged insect's summer pride.  
In robes of many hues and circling gold  
Martyr and virgin forms 'mid angel shapes  
And heaven-raught palms, and holiest names enscrolled,  
A long procession ranged, in priestly capes  
Wide-flowing, or monkish cowl, and hermits hoar  
On mountain summits lone or jutting capes.  
There I beheld who<sup>2</sup> on the Libyan shore

<sup>1</sup> Sir Francis and Lady Palgrave are buried in the village church-yard of Irstead, in East Norfolk.

<sup>2</sup> S. Augustine.

To Cato's martyr-memory consecrate,  
Kindled the quenchless torch of Hippo's lore.  
And next in place, though later found in date,

Two cloistered shapes I saw, from Clairvaux' bower  
One,<sup>1</sup> from Aquino's crags his laurelled mate.<sup>2</sup>  
But most the giant twain, to whom the power

Was given the crumbling shrine of priestly Rome  
Firm to up-prop, till past the perilous hour ;  
Where on Galicia's rocks th' Atlantic foam

Its saltness breaks, thence the stern leader<sup>3</sup> came  
Who fenced with word and deed the Fisher's tomb.  
And linked with his in equal praise the name<sup>4</sup>

By sandalled myriads borne, a seraph band  
Who for their own Alverno's mystery<sup>5</sup> claim.  
And last but mightiest he<sup>6</sup> whose high command

Given in the Name of Power, what prostrate lay  
Upreared, the broken linked in healing band.  
But where in tremulous gleam the tapers' ray

From moulded gold and gems reflected shone,  
A fairer prospect wooed me to delay.

Here with calm eyes fronting the Tyrant's throne

Stood th' Alexandrian maid<sup>7</sup> ; the torturing wheel  
Shivered by angel-might beside was strown.

And 'mid the full-swollen pomp of proud Castile

In poorest vestment clad, Heaven's cloistered bride<sup>8</sup>  
Bore on her heart impressed the bridegroom's seal.

Horrible visions of the Inquisition follow, and I hasten  
onward.

<sup>1</sup> S. Bernard.

<sup>2</sup> S. Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>3</sup> S. Ignatius Loyola.

<sup>4</sup> S. Francis.

<sup>5</sup> The sanctuary where S. Francis received the *Stigmata*.

<sup>6</sup> Presumably Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII.

<sup>7</sup> S. Catharine.

<sup>8</sup> S. Teresa.



## CANTO XVIII

In the chancel I see symbols and visions of the birth and progress  
of Christianity.

We enter the chancel, where the Cross is the only  
symbol seen,

Reared on earth's central mound, when noonday night  
Hid from a trembling world what else had been  
As lightning's scathing flash to th' upturned sight.  
A life transformed in death, a glory seen  
In murkiest gloom, an earthly Form with heaven  
Instinct :

A vision revealing mercy united with wrath, despair  
with hope, "and more than thought can reach."

From the dim margin of a silent shore  
Who morn by morn has journeyed, purpose-led  
What inland lies of some new realm to explore,  
Till all his travel-mates outgone or dead  
Alone he stands, where from the shelving ground  
Wells forth a mighty river's fountain-head,  
Ice-cold and crystal clear, a grassy mound  
Scarce marks the spot ; yet hence the waters flow

Whose giant course nor climes nor empires bound.  
Silent he stands and thinks how far below

Lie the wide plains and feathery groves of palm  
Where these cool streams in torrid sunlight flow.  
How all unlike these mountain heights, the balm  
Of mountain flowers, to where the ship-thronged  
river

'Mid crowded quays meets ocean's muddy calm !  
How sullied there, how stainless here, yet ever  
Though thus transformed the same : distance nor  
change

Can from their fount these far-flowing waves dis sever.  
Yet to the crowds who by the populous range  
Dwell of the full-swoll'n stream, where broad and  
deep

Seaward the wharf-girt waters pass, how strange  
Were the small rivulet cold and pure, the steep,  
Th' untrodden grass, whence to the haunts of men  
Down heights unknown the gathered waters leap !  
So tranced I stood, so lost in musings, when

Of the great Power that o'er the earth has gone  
Conquering and moulding all, before my ken  
Revealed the Source I saw, the glorious One,  
The visible God, the King by twofold birth  
High o'er all kings, as o'er all thrones his throne.  
Lowest and loftiest of the sons of earth,

Son of the Eternal Love ; compared with Thee  
All loveliest things nor beauty have nor worth.  
A mist-enfolded star, a Deity  
Through human limbs diffused ;

By man how sadly despised and mistreated !

O flower of Jesse's line ! how rough the stem  
That bore thy blossomed grace ! how sharp the thorn  
To that true Eden hedge and diadem !

Thus while I mused, as cross a doubtful morn

In the low East a rising cloud with rain  
Black, or upgathered hail is quickly borne  
On angry winds of storm, till all the plain

Where full-eared hopes even now with yellowing green  
Shone to the dawn, in darkness fades again,  
So round that awful Form where anguish keen

Was one with keener Love, a murky cloud  
From earth uprising wove a crape-like screen.  
And masks of purport new, a motley crowd

Stranger than opiate dreams, of imageries  
In mitred pomp and brodered vestment proud  
And more than kingly state ; in coarsest frieze

Others of various dye, and banners wrought  
Fluttered with symbols quaint, and crowns, and  
keys,

And visions these betwixt than human thought

Loftier and purer shown, and eyes to heaven  
Upraised, and smiles, foretastes of what they sought,  
And bliss supreme 'mid earth's worst sufferance given,

And joy in anguish perfect made, and pain  
To pleasure turned, and roughest ways to even.  
As woven in myriad dyes a silken skein

Grows to a dazzling web, where first and last  
Sequence and form the gazer seeks in vain,  
So was the shifting veil that dense and fast

Rose from the temple floor, till all beside  
Invisible grown to mere effacement passed.  
In mind as sight perplexed, to my true guide,

Who constant stood beside, I turned to seek  
What might of good or ill that change betide.  
Stern was his look ; to marble blanched his cheek

Of sorrow told and awe ; his lifted hand  
Summoned expectance yet forbade to speak.  
And denser now than erst th' adoring band

Gathered about the shrine, and thick the steam

With phantoms wove an eye-perplexing strand.  
And false or true or waking sense or dream

I knew not to discern, nor might divine  
What the hid purport of th' enacted theme.  
Then from that serried throng which filled the shrine

A murmur rose, as when th' upgathering storm  
Sends its hoarse herald through the mountain pine.  
And where concealed awhile that royal Form

In god-like anguish calm enshrouded stood,  
Hid by the gleams that dazzle and deform,  
A light obscure of crimson tinge like blood  
Spread from beyond the veil, from floor to roof  
Filling the fane as with a whelming flood :  
Till in its glow th' illusion-painted woof

Melted to formless haze ; and midmost there  
Like the red star hung in mid heaven aloof  
An angry Presence glowed ; around the air

Quivered, and with responsive tremor shook  
Altar and shrine and walls and sculptures rare.  
As who perplexed in some great Master's book

Looks to resolve his doubtful mind, so I  
Bent on my guide again th' enquiring look.  
But in his face even such expectancy

As in my own I knew, though nought of dread  
Was there, but fate's presage in purport high.  
As when in distant street the measured tread,

With martial music heard, to the great crowd  
Preludes the victor King's approach, each head  
Is turned whence comes the sound, like wheat-fields  
bowed

By harvest-winds one way, on every mien  
One thought, one hope, one vassal fear avowed.  
Till now where reddest glowed the vaporous screen

O'er apse and altar shed, a Form of old  
By the lone seer of exiled Patmos seen,  
In His own likeness stood ; as burnished gold

In sevenfold furnace fiery made, than snow  
On Alpine peaks more white the vestment's fold.  
But to that Face the sun's meridian glow

Had rayless seemed and pale ; the lightning gleam  
Matched with those eyes a fire-damp's flickering show.  
And where His feet were stayed, a fiery stream

Issued and flowed resistless ; and afar  
Seven lamps of fire sent forth a quenchless beam.  
And in His open palm a sevenfold star

In azure lustre shone ; and His keen breath  
Was as a falchion's edge made sharp for war ;

The evils whereof are seen behind Him. Yet

His brows around  
All-conquering Love had bound the victor's wreath.  
With highest power, with deepest anguish, crowned,

In each supreme He stood ; His blazoned sway  
Nor cyclic years nor secular orbits bound.  
As in mid noon-day's tower some meteor ray

Of the eighth heaven portentous denizen  
Blots with excess of light the natural day,  
So earth's connatal powers, the gods till then

Believed, adored, by th' all-eclipsing Cross  
Blurred and effaced passed from the world of men.

Lament for the lost youth of humanity.

## CANTO XIX

The building vanishes—My guide narrates the disappearance of the Pagan deities, and the rise of Hope and Fear to rule in their place—Praise of Paganism—A vision of early life and later creeds promised.

The shrine and all about it vanishes : my guide alone remains.

THEN I ; “ If thine to tell, O Master ! say

What means that painted shrine, the pageant rare  
A moment shown, then dream-like snatched away.

If true, why cancelled thus the semblance fair ?

If false, by whom ordained ? from love or hate  
The boon ? in hope perfected, or despair ? ”

Then he ; “ The Powers that o’er man’s earthly state

For good or ill preside, from first to last  
Fortune or chance by you misnamed, or fate,  
Each in his day prevails, while to the past

The present still succeeds, as o’er the slope  
From gliding clouds quick shadows pause or pass.  
Eternal they, yet kin to earth ; their scope

Is aye to earth proportionate found ; its measure  
No wider range to fear allows or hope,—  
Fortunate isles, Elysian fields of pleasure,  
Or dark Cimmerian caves, and streams denied

“To perjured thirst, and harpy-guarded treasure.  
Yet as the tales at evening told beside

The cottage hearth, full oft in fancy's loom  
True deeds inweave, hidden or travestied,  
So 'neath the fabling talk of Greece and Rome

In scant disguise veiled of prose or lay  
Th' eternal purport hides, reward or doom.  
These the fit birth-gifts of the natal day

Which welcomed man new-born ; with these content  
From morn to eve to wend life's pilgrim way.  
Till from a Power unknown but mightier sent

He came, the conquering Lord, who that fair veil  
Of earth-woven hopes and fears asunder rent.

Paganism then passes away :

Silent th' oracular caves ; the ocean's floor  
Untracked by Tethys' wheels ; untenanted  
Th' Olympic heights and Ida's summits hoar.

In its place two mighty forms overshadow man—Hope  
and Fear. A blank, godless age is prophesied for  
the close.

Yet not in vain the past, nor all deceived  
Who erst those shrines adored ; the faithful heart  
Abides of its sure guerdon unbereaved.

But happiest they who with their birthright's part  
Contented, seek no further range, nor borrow  
From worlds unknown vain solace, vainer smart :  
From life's to-day forecasting life's to-morrow

As from the bud the leaf, whate'er betide,  
Sunshine of surer bliss, or clouds of sorrow.  
All these in peaceful state their hour abide

Who from earth's earliest dawn to evening grey  
Have their first pathway kept, nor turned aside

“To the fond beckonings of a gaudier day.

These too shalt thou behold, and tread the vale,  
Fabled or real, of Mantua's elder lay.<sup>1</sup>

These past, another realm, the margined pale

To later creeds assigned, shall to thy view  
Their portioned meed, blessing or doom unveil.  
There as th' optician's art in sevenfold hue

Untwists the skein of common light, thy glance  
Shall foul from fair dispart, and false from true ;  
Such power I now confer ; Athena's lance

With less discerning touch the Titan host  
Wide scattering, roused the gods from fateful trance.  
And these beyond whom th' Erythraean coast

And Mecca's vale sent forth, a name to none  
Second for ill, Arabia's prophet-boast ;  
With him the turbaned crowd whose empire won

O'er tottering Cross and phantom throne, even now  
Flaunts its proud Crescent to Byzantium's sun.  
And further yet what later creeds avow

Of undeterminate power, a fancied soul  
Of all that is, nor personal Rule allow,  
Find their allotted place, till reached the goal

To them, to all, assigned, where reigns above  
Th' eternal Truth, the absolute Life, the pole  
Of the all-containing orb, the central Love.”

<sup>1</sup> Virgil's *Sixth Aeneid*.



## CANTO XX

In a lovely landscape we reach the Fountain of Youth—I bathe in it, and my eyes are opened to the fair inhabitants of the region ; Olympus rising over all, peopled with the gods of Greece, India, and Ethiopia—Glimpse of the infernal regions—Rhapsody on ancient Hellas and her deities.

O HAPPY Spring, than Summer's blossomed pride,  
Than Autumn's wealth more fair ! O happy Spring  
Of renovate earth the bridal veil and bride !  
There is no joy like thine ; each loveliest thing  
Is tarnish-dimmed save thee ; thou only shinest  
For ever new, unbruised by Time's rough wing.  
The emerald sprays, the starry flowers thou twinest,  
Youth's mirrored self, beauty's embodiment,  
Are thy fit crown, of all divine divinest.  
—Now through a blossomed mead my footsteps went  
With him, my constant guide ; and all around  
Breathed the cool air a many-perfumed scent.  
And little hills with plummy verdure crowned  
Bordered the way ; and the many-throated song  
Of garrulous birds made answer to the sound  
Of rippling streams, hid their fringed banks among,  
And over all the cloudless hyaline  
A myriad sparks of living brightness flung.  
A land of perfect peace ; a land of vine

Olive and corn and fruits and sheaves ; a land  
Of life with youth twin-fashioned haunt and shrine.  
As budding twigs by April breezes fanned

Put forth their leaves in gladness, so renewed  
In sense and heart that loveliest scene I scanned.  
Yet not by plain nor hill nor stream nor wood

Could aught my circling eyes discern, to tell  
What dwellers owned this seeming solitude.  
Then to my guide I turned, the oracle

Of sure response, the torch whose steady ray  
Could every darkness raised of doubt dispel.  
And thus ; " Guardian and guide of these my ways

Through the mid-lustral realm, what blest sojourn  
Is this ? to whom assigned the blossomed maze ? "

Then he ; " By yon cool glade where densest fern  
With harebells blends its fronds, and primrose pale,  
Shalt thou to what thou ask'st the answer learn."

Then with slow steps as who some ancient pale  
Of reverent worship trod, our way we bent,  
He first, I following through the margined vale,  
Till in a glade we stood where twined and bent

Tall branches screened the day ; a stream before  
By grass and stems in liquid coolness went.

" That which thou seek'st," now spoke my guide, " the  
lore

Hid from a world grown old, the primal truth,  
Gospel of grace to man, the gods of yore,  
Here be it thine to know ; the stains uncouth

Of earth's decrepit years, the dust of time  
Cleansed in the stream thou seest, the fount of youth."

Not with more eager haste in Nubia's clime  
The herdsman parched and lone, if chance he hears  
From the far well the bucket's clanking chime,  
Urges his camel's course ; athirst his ears

Drink in the welcome sound, that farther still  
Seems from his fierce desire the more he nears,

Than at the Master's words a sudden thrill

Of longing mixed with pain my mortal frame  
Pierced, and compelled to his my thought and will ;  
That had the stream in place been liquid flame

Nought had it stayed my forward plunge, or bent  
From its resolve a moment's space my aim.  
But fresh as mountain breeze the element

Closed o'er me where I sank, then to the air  
Restored me with new power and life besprent.  
Smiling my Master welcome gave, and there

Laid on my eyes his hands, when all around  
Groves, plains, grass, flowers, in sight transfigured  
were.

Not lonely now nor mute, with music's sound

Breathed the low winds responsive ; forms divine  
Some with mere beauty, some with aureole crowned,  
Or wreathed with fadeless flowers or tendrilled vine,

Moved on the lawn, or the tall trees between  
Shone, as large stars from clouds emerging shine.  
Nor these alone, but o'er the mounded green

Maidens and youths and hero forms, and boys  
With laughing girls beside, a motley scene ;  
Some linked in earnest talk, some to glad noise

Of flutes and cymbals lightly passed, and some  
Loitered in smiles and jests and amorous toys.  
And overhead in many-coloured loom

Of living forms it seemed, height over height,  
Converse of earth uprose th' Olympian dome.  
Infinite beauty matched with infinite might,

And each to each reflex, as cloudless skies  
Give and receive great ocean's tremulous light.  
For there th' earth-ruling powers, the deities

In happier days known and adored, their court  
Once more an hour displayed to mortal eyes ;  
Erst on Olympus' peaks, fitting resort

To man's proportionate gaze, or fabled more

Meru, or that far realm of old report

By lotus groves on th' Ethiopian shore ;

Or throned in solar fires, as sign by sign  
Given to each race its heaven-appointed lore.

In fabling tale, or song, or dateless page

Enshrined the heirloom given ; but fairest far  
To Greece assigned the luminous heritage.  
Brightest and best of heaven-born lights ; true star

Of morning risen on earth, precursor meet  
Of the glad forms that tend Hyperion's car,  
The perfume-laden Hours, the glancing feet

That weave the dance Pierian, and the grace  
Threefold of sister charm and influence sweet.  
There with swift lightnings girt in loftiest place

The Lord of gods and men <sup>1</sup> in calm serene  
Bent o'er the kindred crowd his awful face.  
And there in rainbow-circled state was seen

Large-eyed, in partner-state the Sister bride <sup>2</sup>  
Olympian born, of Argos shield and Queen.  
And there brightest and best in circling pride

Of his own fervent rays the Loxian god <sup>3</sup>  
Monarch of day, stood the great throne beside.  
And in glad youth, with winged swiftness shod

Fair Maia's fairer son, <sup>4</sup> in mirth entwined  
With spells of power the light Caducean rod.  
There in an hour of borrowed peace reclined

The warrior god <sup>5</sup> whose crimson planet bears  
Like name, of old in Thracian fanes enshrined.  
Him most unlike, stateliest 'mid heavenly peers

The Maiden wisdom <sup>6</sup> stood ; with olive bough  
Fruitful, in peace she leads the golden years.  
By her the virgin huntress Queen, <sup>7</sup> her bow

In crescent silver clear, Heaven's wonderment,

<sup>1</sup> Zeus.

<sup>4</sup> Hermes.

<sup>2</sup> Héré.

<sup>5</sup> Ares (Mars).

<sup>7</sup> Artemis Seléné.

<sup>3</sup> Apollo.

<sup>6</sup> Athena Parthenos.

Beacon-like gleamed o'er Latmos' pine-clad brow.  
And, loveliest, thou whom lone Cythera sent

The sea-born Queen of Love!<sup>1</sup> the unparalleled  
Centre and star of being's firmament.

All perfect deemed ere thee, all beauty held

Supreme in earth or heaven, from mind and eye  
Passes, by thee resumed, possessed, excelled.

O visioned dome of a god-tenanted sky,

O'er a god-tenanted earth! of human hearts  
Desire! nor all for human sense too high!

And other forms were there; thy quivered darts

Eros! and thy culled flowers, Proserpina!

And who<sup>2</sup> to heaven the nectared bowl disparts,

Rapt by the Idaean bird, and Saturn grey

Unthroned but reverend seen, and with his crew  
Roseate in vine-wreathed car Iacchus gay.

And at the mountain's sea-marged base to view

Distant, yet clear, Nereus with Neptune joined  
Drove his swart dolphins through the sparkling blue.

But in far depths uncertain, undefined

The hated realms with woe Tartarean fraught  
Glimmered, a lurid dread by guilt designed.

Of love contemned, to vengeance changed, were wrought

Those iron gates of pain; love's righteous law

Righteously to revere, the lore they taught.

But soon the chasm reclosed, though the great awe

Awhile remained, then slowly passed, as chid  
Might prowling beasts to shrouded dens withdraw.

And other mysteries once unveiled, but hid

From eyes profane of later ignorance,

In their own proper fullness unforbid

'Mid the great mount I saw; the Sibyl's trance,

The oracle-breathing gulf, Dodona's fane,

The rustling oak's response, the priestly dance,—

<sup>1</sup> Aphrodité.

<sup>2</sup> Ganymede borne to Olympus by the Eagle.

All these and else whate'er to minds profane

Meaningless things and void abide, to me  
Shone in undying truth, nor shone in vain,  
Of all that is, or was, or is to be

Mirrored in one reflex ; as the bright day  
In countless sparkles of the infinite sea.

Then as with ebbing pulse the solemn lay

From quire to quire replies, when thronged the fane  
For a great nation's yearly holiday,  
So at the vision's close a mingled stream

Of harp and voice from that Olympian height  
Shower-like descending, rose from earth again,  
Till sound, and form, and rainbow hues, and light,

And the fair vale beneath, and heaven above  
One universe made, one being, one delight,

In the fair realm of life-incarnate Love.

## CANTO XXI

A landscape in North-Eastern Greece—Apollo, Herakles, Admetus,  
and Alcestis are seen together—The two last tell their story.

FROM the great splendour of the early gods,  
Earliest yet fairest they, my eyes I turned  
To the cool solace of terrene abodes,  
While yet th' o'erarching dome that conscious burned  
With forms divine, like morn's gay hues by day  
Yet unabsorbed, its living hues inurned.  
But fronting where we stood, with olives grey  
And terraced vineyards marged, and meadows green  
Mottled with kine, Boeotia's<sup>1</sup> waters lay.  
Untold the name I knew, and far between  
Where tillage-patched the ground, and hamlet smoke  
Curled in thin wreaths, were Pherae's turrets seen.  
A land of peaceful days ; nor trumpet woke  
Echoes of war and fear, nor barbarous foe  
Loosed the scared oxen from the ploughman's yoke.  
Nor blight the springtide marred, nor parching glow  
Of drought made summer bare, nor ray malign  
Of thwarting star might fields or pastures know.  
But flocks of silky fleece, and herded kine  
And harvest-laden wains, and promise there

<sup>1</sup> Erroneously named for *Phthiotis* ; the *waters* are the Gulf of Pagasae.

Of orchard gold and purple clustered vine.  
These I beheld, nor from the prospect fair  
Diverted thought, till as to gazing eyes  
Sudden a star responds in evening air,  
So to my view revealed in glad surprise  
Beauty with strength allied in fourfold band  
Showed as the polar pride of austral skies.

Apollo, Herakles, Admetus, Alcestis are seen together—  
My guide names their heroic deeds—Alcestis then  
narrates her wedded happiness, Admetus' death,  
and the appearance of Apollo; who tells her the  
conditions of Admetus' restoration to life.

"No more he spoke, nor need; no doubtful strife  
Held my divided thought; alone my lord  
Death-stricken I saw, knew but my name of wife.  
O welcome more than to the sun-parched sward  
Are summer rains, or to a mother's breast  
Her only son from far past hope restored,  
To me that sudden pang, from mortal vest  
Disrobing my free soul, that joyed to know  
Granted the prayer, fulfilled the glad behest!"

Love gladly submits to such loss—Admetus renders  
thanks for his happiness.

Thus while he spoke so grew the scene as when,  
Seldom beheld, the zodiac heavens among  
Four master planets greet the gazer's ken,  
Yellow and red and white and crimson, hung  
As in one lamp, while broad and bright the day  
Widening beneath such upward radiance flung,—  
Even so the wondrous four from earth's decay  
To deathless heaven withdrawn, all change above,  
Passed with that happier age; true mirrors they  
Of earth with heaven instinct in mutual Love.



## CANTO XXII

Vision of heroes of Greek mythology, and glorification of Greece.

O LOVED and welcomed most whate'er the eye  
Has first in love beheld, on which the mind  
Has first assayed its hidden alchemy  
To its own self transforming all in kind.  
Much we behold in after days, but still  
In nought like these heart's true repose we find :  
Nor charm of foreign clime nor scene has skill,  
Though decked in brightest hues, the soul t' enchain  
As that first vision of life's fronting hill.  
Such too his joy whom distant lands detain  
'Mid stranger speech, if chance the accents known  
To childhood's ears renew the simple strain.  
Even so to me those names familiar grown  
In boyhood's opening morn their welcome made,  
In their own living truth substantial shown.

This was no phantom vision, the Gods existing still in  
power to bless or ban—A vast multitude of beautiful  
forms, heroes, matrons, virgins, is seen : Theseus,  
Peirithous, Hippolytus :

There too new lighted on th' Icarian hill <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ethiopian, according to legend.

He<sup>1</sup> who the tribute shame of virgin blood  
 Endured not, virgin-born in hours of ill.  
 And there unbowed unwronged beside him stood  
 In naked beauty clad with downcast eyes  
 The rescued type of spotless maidenhood.<sup>2</sup>

Io is also here, and Iphigeneia.

There too with serious mien like one intent  
 On deeds the thought disowns, and lustral wreath  
 Twined round her pallid brows, Electra went.<sup>3</sup>  
 Nor yet a mother's crime, a father's death,  
 Had all from memory past, though calm serene  
 Sat in her eyes and tuned her even breath.  
 And still, like light diffused, th' Athenian Queen  
 Was present there, and Phoebus' cleansing fire  
 Felt by the conscious sense, a power unseen.  
 And there from thirst unslaked of vain desire  
 The self-consuming soul of him<sup>4</sup> who deemed  
 All height attained but mounting step to higher,  
 Who from Chimaera's triform curse redeemed  
 Lycia, thy vineclad slopes, himself the while  
 Mightiest of men, yet outcast most he seemed,  
 Lord of the broad-winged steed,<sup>5</sup> by force or guile  
 Victor in scornful might; then phantom-chased  
 O'er the Alacian plains in drear exile.  
 Here be thy rest, great spirit; the seeming waste  
 Of gems for earth too rare, in treasured store  
 Are gathered here, 'mid their own brightness placed;

And many more from Grecian lands.

<sup>1</sup> Perseus, son to Danae.

<sup>2</sup> Andromeda.

<sup>3</sup> Daughter to Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.

<sup>4</sup> Bellerophon.

<sup>5</sup> Pegasus.

As 'mid the pleasant hills where rolls the tide  
Of gathered Rhine some plots of happier ground  
Bear a fine fruitage to all else denied,  
Nectar of choicest fount, though nought around  
The perfumed source reveal, or reason show  
In heaven's aspect or local influence found.  
Even thus all gifts the lords of earth bestow  
On other lands, fair Greece, compared with thine  
Are but as woodland fruits that common grow,  
To the choice clusters of the tended vine ;  
For thine the natural grace, the loveliness  
Of human life inwoven with life divine.  
Till men with gods and gods with men no less  
In just proportion moved, and each with each  
Blended, a Psyché twined in love's caress.  
Nor vaunt of nobler height nor wider reach  
Than this has earth beheld, nor rival peers  
Can subtler lore or deeper wisdom teach.  
From throes of vain desire, from phantom fears  
Exempt, in truth content, in truth complete  
Was the great orb of Hellas' golden years.  
Thus spoke the voice, and ceased ; to music sweet  
Changing the inarticulate close, nor I  
What more I heard may in this verse repeat.  
Then as in gathered pomp of pageant high  
From door to tapestried dais some palace hall  
Dazzles with myriad hues the enquiring eye ;  
Where silks and diamond sparks and plumage tall  
In flickering movement blend, a shifting mass,  
Colour and form and light from wall to wall,  
Then to the orchestra's voice subdued they pass  
In ordered range distinct, till perfect there  
The figured dance its full completeness has,  
Single with single poised and pair with pair,  
Till all, confused before, by the sweet spell  
Is woven in beauty's loom,—so swift so fair

The Olympian mount, the Aetolian citadel,  
With all they held of gods and god-like men,  
Nature's perfection, mountain, plain and dell,  
To such a oneness grew that subtlest ken  
Could naught misplaced discern, but last and first  
From one derived to one returned again.  
As a fair rose in some choice garden nurst  
By earth and air, sunshine and diamond dew,  
All precious things else separate and dispersed  
Joins to one perfect orb of form and hue,  
In its sole compass nature's best to prove,  
Hellas ! such rose wast thou ; thy leaves bestrew  
The ruined shrines of Saturn, Jove, and Love.

## CANTO XXIII

The beautiful old world fades—My guide reveals its reappearance  
—We enter a desert, and see a Mohammedan army—Sketch  
of the career of Mahomet and his followers.

The spectacle of Hellas passes away :

And like a child widowed of brief delight  
I wept that vision fair that nevermore  
May gild earth's dwindling day or cheer her night,  
Till the great winter's frost from shore to shore  
Have frozen life's restless sea, and deadly chill  
Pulseless abide the planet's inmost core.

I grieve with idle tears,

Till spoke my guide, "Why mourn'st thou? vain the  
tears

Shed for what fades nor dies, though changeful form  
O'er the bright glass draw the dim veil of years.

Thick roll the mists of the ever-varying storm,

And bleak the snow-strewn path, but th' upper skies  
Nor envious vapours stain nor clouds deform.

Twain are the natures, twain the eternities

Of gods, and men by gods beloved ; nor time

"Shall dim their star, nor fret their Paradise.  
Though rare and rarer yet the heights who climb  
Where in th' assurance of inviolate Truth  
Throne the high gods, with men as gods sublime.  
The planet's secular spring, the bloom of youth,  
Have from the painted canvass passed ; but yet,  
Though marked by wrinkled age and piteous ruth,  
Abides the essential life, from the fierce fret  
Of sect and creed secure ; so sure, so deep  
On the hid core the seal divine is set.  
With this content abide, nor fondly steep  
In vain regrets thy strength ; rugged and long  
Yet lies the path our destined steps must tread,  
Even to life's utmost bourne, where temporal wrong  
Fades as a noontide cloud, till all complete  
Be the full measure of th' appointed song.  
And short the fate-permitted hours, and fleet  
The dial's passing shade, nor twice to man  
May due performance with occasion meet."  
Then I, "As on parched plains the breezes fan  
A half-extinguished fire, so now thy speech  
Quickens the emprise thy guidance erst began.  
Thine to conduct, sole Master, thine to teach ;  
To learn, to follow, mine, far as the stair  
May upward climb, or orb'd existence reach."  
And now our eyes before, level and bare,  
Such desert spread as by Tchaëona's<sup>1</sup> waste  
Fit margin makes to the Erythraean's glare.  
Nor herbage green nor painted floweret graced  
That desolate silence, barren all and dry  
With pebbly sands and splintered rock defaced.  
And from unclouded depths th' o'erarching sky  
Poured down the heat that kills, and on the sand  
Th' illusive vapour mocked the thirsty eye.  
Thus while we went, far o'er the distant strand

<sup>1</sup> Apparently a desert near the Red Sea.

That in long ranges heaved, what doubtful seemed  
If dust or smoke, approaching wreaths I scanned.  
More and more near they drew, while through them  
gleamed

Flashes of steely light ; and these among,  
But higher raised, outslanted bannerets streamed.  
Till through the dusty veil revealed a throng

Of swart-browed warriors tall with eager eyes,  
Panoplied mail, keen swords, and lances long  
Sudden before us ranged, from storm-vexed skies

As herded sea-birds sweep when to their flight  
Refuge or rest the weltering wave denies,  
Dark as the vanguard cloud of conquering night

In th' East upgathering wide, an ominous shade  
Across our path, barring the onward sight.  
Such was the phantom band, so broad displayed

Nor friends nor foes as yet, each horseman grim  
As for brief parle a grudging period made.  
Then with low voice thus spoke my guide, "Of him

Arabia's prophet son, whom first the land  
From Syria's hills to Aden's ocean rim  
Teacher and lord revered ; at whose command

Of that fierce tribe the warring elements  
Were each with each soldered in adamant band,  
The shade thou seest ; and who th' uncounted tents

Of Nejd and the far South, by that fierce spirit  
Transformed to age-enduring monuments  
Who the great fame or infamy inherit

Summed in thy name, Islam ! a name of power  
Alike to those who spurn and those who bear it.  
O dark the noontide gloom and woe the hour

When th' unseen might in Gabriel's borrowed name  
Bore the first summons to Khadjah's bower !  
As falls on withered leaves the lightning flame,

The secular woods around to one vast pyre  
Kindling in sudden blaze, so fateful came

“On that dark mind adust the daemon fire  
From Calpe’s pillared gates to farthest tide  
Of sunrise seas remote ; nor gilded spire  
Of Buddha’s holiest shrines, nor marble pride  
Of Europe’s worshipped cross th’ inviolate sign,  
Might unconsumed that fiery torrent bide.”  
He spoke, and pointed to the turbaned line  
Of those who scant of pomp, in semblance rude,  
Trampled to dust th’ imperial Byzantine.  
“Nor long ere Persia’s jewelled multitude  
Felt the keen sabre’s edge, and Susa mourned  
Her sacred fires, quenched in a priesthood’s blood.  
Thence from a conquered Orient Westward turned  
The sword of God misnamed, till farthest Spain  
Had the fit meed of tyrannous incest earned.<sup>1</sup>  
Even to the Pyrenean, and the red plain  
Known of Poitiers, where first the crescent moon  
Of Mecca’s heaven shrunk to unwonted wane  
In the far West reversed ; but all too soon  
Renewed its fires, as some fell meteor lamp  
Blasts with ill-omened glare th’ astonished noon.  
So with fierce cymbal clang and myriad tramp  
Of Tartar steeds the hordes of Gobi’s<sup>2</sup> waste  
Poured on the fenceless lands their locust camp :  
An Eden smiled their march before, defaced  
And desolate all behind, from old Cathay  
On to the bounds by Helle’s waters traced ;  
Till from Byzantium’s towers the latest ray  
Of Hellas’ lore divine and Flavian glory<sup>3</sup>  
In blood and fire for ever passed away.  
The rest thou know’st ; the Danube waters gory  
With Christian rout, Otranto’s ghastly cry,

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the legend of Cava ravished.

<sup>2</sup> In MS. written *Kobi*.

<sup>3</sup> The glory of the best period of the Roman Empire ; or because Vespasian made Byzantium a Roman Province.



“And lost Mohacks, and shamed Vienna’s story.  
But this deep graven retain ; ’twixt earth and sky  
Than this no deadlier blight the ill-matched pair,  
Error with Truth, have given for progeny.”  
Scarce had he spoke, such clamours filled the air  
As when the clarion call from tent to tent  
Bids a great host for new assault prepare.  
No God but God, the One, no message sent  
But his, the Prophet Chief’s, with wavering yell  
Loud clanging o’er the pageant-heaven was sent.<sup>1</sup>  
Each hand the sabre gripped, each visage fell  
Lowered with intent of ill, as wolves at even  
Glare on the traveller by the darkening fell.  
Trembled the ground beneath, with gloom the heaven  
Was grey, while shapes of death those ranks before  
Flew like wreck-ominous birds by tempest driven.  
Where now the smiles of Love, the joys of yore  
By populous town or hamlet known or grove ;  
Where the fair forms of Rome and Greece, the store  
Treasured for men beloved by Gods who love ?

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* MS.

## CANTO XXIV

Mohammedan heroes are seen in vision, and a final true Paradise is prophesied for them.

By Tigris' crumbling banks and Syria's plains  
Who meets the whirling cloud that pillared high  
With storm-swept dust the noonday radiance stains,  
More wildered bides not in mid way than I,  
Whelmed in that angry gloom where sound and sight  
No aid could bring, nor hopeful clue supply.  
And nature's self, of all that bears delight  
Forbid where needed most, in senseless swoon  
Sought a brief respite from that evil night.  
Prostrate on earth I lay; not long, for soon,  
As through deep waters dimly visible  
Strange forms float upward to the magic moon,  
So through the darkness blank and palpable  
Of my tranced spirit as on a curtained screen  
Rose the great forms of Islam's inmost spell.  
Of fair presentment some ; and some were seen  
Stateliest of hero mould, and some with gloom  
Darkly deformed, some with pure joy serene.  
And first his pictured form <sup>1</sup> I knew to whom  
By rightful heirdom due, by guile delayed,

<sup>1</sup> Ali.

Mecca a Lordship, Kufa gave a tomb ;  
Fourth of the Caliph line, yet first, thy blade  
Two-edged on foes and friends was turned ; by thee  
The deadliest wound<sup>1</sup> in Islam's breast was made,  
Cloven by that sword in twain ; each moiety

Unites no more, but with strange life endured  
Grows to new forms of dateless enmity.  
Then as a ripple fades from off the flood

Faded that awful form, and in its place  
Rising a diverse shape,<sup>2</sup> yet kindred, stood ;  
Midway 'twixt youth's first bloom and the early grace

Of manhood's prime it came ; but foully showed  
With blood the hands defiled, with blood the face.  
Now less than man with anguish marred, a god

Irradiate now with conquest, like the star  
Of demon name th' alternate presence glowed.  
Herald of love divine, from regions far

An angel sent to earth, from fiercest hell  
A power of dark deceit and ruthless war.  
What legends strange unvouched, what secular spell

Circles thy name, what fruits thy blossoms bear,  
Fairest and foulest Asia's pages tell.  
Then as that image passed, the dusky air

Grew to uncounted forms, in vesture quaint  
Such as in maddest hours earth's masquers wear.  
But shadowy more and vague they seemed, and faint

The banners o'er them waved ; uncertain things,  
Despot or slave I knew not, fiend or saint.  
To the drugged wretch no wilder vision brings

Poppy or henbane fell, nor denser throng  
To Scythian field corpse-scented vulture wings.  
And but the power of that enchantment strong

To slumber bound my bodily sense, amaze,

<sup>1</sup> The schism between *Shiites* and *Sonmites*, Persians and Turks.

<sup>2</sup> Husein, son of Ali.

O'er-mastering trance, had done the vision wrong,  
As North winds scatter clouds ; but now my gaze

Was prisoner held, while that vague imagery  
Grew to distinctness on the pictured haze.  
There in 'mid circle hailed, with call and cry

Wearying the Meccan heaven, a motley band  
Sole truth sole lord proclaimed their fancy's lie ;  
And some in pilgrim guise from land to land

Passed to the central shrine, where the fierce flame  
Of Islam burns by yearly breezes fanned.  
Others a servile garb and borrowed name

O'er wealth and lineage cast, from palace-home  
Self-banished wanderers made, nor thought it shame  
With outcasts vile and leper hordes to roam,

Scornful and scorned of earth, by weariness,  
Hunger, nor pain nor death itself, o'ercome,—  
Such power has love divine ; though in false dress

Mis-trapped by fancy's wrong ; and all away  
The aim, but sure the bolt, and true the stress.  
For the sphered influence of the infolding sky

May be disguised, not quenched ; through mist and  
cloud

Passes unseen the life-giving alchemy.

Then changed the scene ; I saw where thronged a  
crowd,

Eager with hate and hate's worst hopes, beneath  
A palace gate ; above, the banner proud  
Of stern Ommeyya to the sultry breath

Of Syria's summer waved ; but in the hall  
Throned gnawing pain and all too lingering death.  
For there the warrior chief<sup>1</sup> whose sword in thrall

Levelled a subject world, from Calpe's straits  
Dreaded to far Cathay's inviolate wall,  
Helpless a captive lies ; those prison gates  
None may unlock but death, who day by day

<sup>1</sup> Uncertain : probably Musa or Khalid.

Nearer, yet slow, the torturer's bidding waits.

Yet on that face serene no shadow lay

Of anxious thought ; no keenest pain or care  
Traced on that brow the lines of hope's decay ;  
But in their place such smile as conquerors wear

When won the day, such radiance calm as grows  
Of love fulfilled and compassed hope were there ;  
Nor the heart-sickening pang, nor keener throes

Of life's great purpose closed, nor doubt nor dread  
Vexed the still depths of that entire repose.

Then was I ware of one who by that bed

In feigned compassion stood, the while his hate  
On visible pain and death its rancour fed.

One who for vengeance long delayed and late

Had watched a tale of years, in hope deferred  
Patient as hound before his master's gate.

Th' outwearied sigh, the moan of anguish heard,

Were to his ear sweet music ; in his breast  
Each sign of pain responsive pleasure stirred.

But he whose storm-tossed bark to the sure rest

Was hastening with spread sail,—and now the keel  
Touched on that shore the haven of his quest,  
Where other airs and other suns reveal

What earth-bound life denied,—on those around  
Gazing, thus of long silence broke the seal :

" My God, my King, by thy acceptance crowned,"

Thus were his words, " my being's sacrifice  
All I desire has full acceptance found.

Enough for me to live, my Lord, though dies

All other life with mine, enough for me  
So God remain though perish earth and skies.  
To be, if such thy will, or not to be

Is to thy servant one ; thy reign beside  
Nought I desire, nor hope, nor know but thee."

Then ere he ceased, as floods the rising tide

Silent but swift the sands, a radiance shone

From the far hills seen through the portals wide ;  
Yet not of earth that splendour, nor the sun

Had in its glory part ; from far away  
Beamed that effulgence of the eternal throne.

And in its light revealed, as breaks the day

Sudden o'er vale and town and height, when riven  
Night's curtain, edged with rain by morn's keen ray,—  
An earth all gems and living gold, a heaven

Vaulted with rainbow splendours, an abode  
To victim love by love triumphant given.

There 'neath green shades of perfumed foliage trod

Singly or grouped in happy converse, they  
By \* men's \* own kin disowned, avowed by God.

'Mid the cool garden shades and perfumed spray

Silent they passed or sate, and love divine  
Clothed them as clothes a bride her pure array.

They from red clusters of the eternal vine

That flowered when Eden was not, with warm hands  
In bowls elysian press the inebriate wine :

Not in Hesperian isles nor fabled lands

Arcadian, glow such clustered grapes, nor stain  
With purple gleam Panchaia's<sup>1</sup> fragrant sands.

But ever and anon a magic strain

Trancing th' astonished sense, through the far trees  
Came like a fitful wind o'er harvest plain.

And as struck harp-cords vibrate to the breeze

Faithful response to faintest touch, a tune

Noteless, all notes above, beyond, so these

Were one with that far music made, and soon

All separate thought, all will, all life were lost  
As shadows lost in the universal noon.

And those who most fantastic showed, or most

In quaint disguise misformed, in that bright beam  
Transfigured shone, fairest of that fair host :

And the deep trance till then that held my dream

<sup>1</sup> Virgilian name for Arabia Felix.

Passed as a morning mist, nor aught remained  
Of all beheld or heard, my wonder's theme,  
But a small voice and still, "The height attained  
Not what they sought, but more, conferred ; the dove  
Awhile with erring flight perplexed, detained,  
Has the true dovecote found, th' all-sheltering Love."

## CANTO XXV

We are now in a lifeless desert, thickly strown with gravestones covered with mouldering sculpture—Here are materialist and sensual philosophers with their followers, Epicurus their leader—These are lost from existence—I grieve at this apparent exception from the law of purgation; but my guide promises for them also a final restoration.

As who from land embarked at eve, alone  
Through darkest night where lamp or moon or star  
Was none, on the damp deck his limbs has thrown  
And feels the heaving plank, but near or far  
Nothing discerns or knows, while the dumb hours  
Muffled attend on night's slow-moving car  
O'er the long arch of Tithon's joyless bowers,  
Till broadens grey the dawn, and lone the sun  
O'er a lone sea looks from his Eastern towers,  
But friendly voice or sight familiar none  
Is there that home recalls, but vapour chill  
And the monotonous wash of waters dun,—  
Then thinks, "If all the past of good or ill  
Be but a fancied dream, no more, and I  
Of shadows vain a shadow vainer still."—  
Such was my thought when to the circling eye  
That gazing sought, but found not, sign nor trace  
Told of the vision's vanished pageantry,



But 'mid rock-margined heights an open space  
Thin-streaked with yellow grass and grey with stone,  
Showed as 'mid grizzled hair an eyeless face.  
Nor motion there nor sound, save the low moan  
As of a restless breeze that fretted there  
Over some loved remembrance lost and gone.  
Nor insect shape the soil nor bird the air  
Furrowed with cheerful life ; above, beneath  
Emptiness stretched o'er empty land and bare.  
"What land, what doom is this, where formless death  
Unpartnered sceptre holds, where trace nor sign  
Of life ? " with stifled voice and difficult breath  
Thus to my guide I spoke, his hand on mine  
The while he laid, and with reviving cheer  
Quickened my step where led the transverse line.  
"Not as thou think'st," he said, "the place, nor here  
Empty the realm and void, though likeness none  
Greet the enquiring eye nor sound the ear.  
This their fit rest assigned whose course was run  
Godless to godless end, who life from earth  
Cancelled, from earth the heaven, from heaven the sun.  
For as a lifeless corpse of little worth,  
A sunless sky, a flowerless mead, a feast  
Spread amid tombs, of music void and mirth,  
So were earth's visible show, or bird or beast,  
Insect or herb or man, of that bereft  
To whom each form, from perfect most to least,  
Is but the apparent mask, assumed or left  
By the hid Power, earth's viewless visitant,  
Pearls of his dew, threads of his burning web.  
As to the sun the flower, as turns the plant  
To the stream-side its roots, as yearns the boy,  
Nor knows his yearning's aim to love's new want,  
So all the years produce, complete, destroy,  
Yearns to the hidden life that day by day  
To each in turn existence gives and joy.

“But these by self-taught paths a joyless way  
On earth pursued, from love exiled, their doom  
Dull morn, unjoyous noon, and evening grey :  
Till for the light their life disowned deep gloom

Quenched their unfuelled orb ; of secular death  
The valley this thou seest, th’ unopening tomb.  
Look round, but here delay not long, unneath<sup>1</sup>

Mayst thou th’ invisible curse abide ; nor here  
Fit place for human heart or human breath.”  
As who when dank in fogs the dying year

Grows to its latest dawn, through misty screen  
Sees wall, or leafless tree, or hedge outpeer,  
So those grey stones and barren sands between,

At distance undiscerned, in nearer view  
Tombstones of various shape and date were seen.  
Not closer laid the lettered slabs that strew,

Yarmouth, thy churchyard sands, and o’er and o’er  
The oft-told tale of shipwrecked death renew ;  
Though by no other beach the memoried store

Of wrong by tempest wrought such record have,  
From Northmost Cape to Devon’s rocky shore.  
But different here the guise ; on every grave

Not writ but imaged forth in form was shown  
Whose the long winter of that godless cave.  
For there no second spring ; the harvest sown

In death, by death is reaped ; the lords of being  
Disowned by these, justly their lot disown.  
Then to this region brought by just decreeing

A timeless date they bide, through ages slow  
Earth’s frustrate years and lustral dues out-dreeing.<sup>2</sup>  
There ’mid those cancelled forms was mine to know

Outlined the shade of him for sage renowned  
By sophist speech, and reason’s empty show :  
Who first a soulless world and empty round  
Of atom chance and blind necessity

<sup>1</sup> Scarcely.

<sup>2</sup> Undergoing penance for.

From Thracia's wold first brought to Grecian ground.  
Then, as the fields when favouring earth and sky

To happiest crops combine, if with ill seed  
Sprinkled, all rankest growths and worst supply,  
So that ill harvest of malignant weed

Blighting the sense and mind, the land o'erspread ;  
A godless tribe, mocked by a godless creed.

"Here the vain crowd by Epicurus led

On varying paths, but frustrate all, attain  
Not as they sought, the death that slays the dead.  
With these whome'er dull heart and shallow brain

Prisoned in earthly sense, the powers they knew not  
Know them not now for joy or penal pain ;  
Here on their native earth the flower that grew not

Grows not for them, but stony barrenness,  
And slow decay, that secular years renew not,  
Till from each Sepulchre-stone the faint impress

Of its dishonoured form by age on age  
Effaced, have passed to utter nothingness.

A rayless sunless starless blank the wage

Of life from life's intent disjoined, a word  
Blotted and lost from being's record page."

Thus spoke my guide, then ceased ; but I who heard

The death pronounced on these, the stony doom  
Whence no recall, with inward doubt was stirred ;  
And thus, "If to no voice, no hope, the tomb

Restore its guarded prey, no second spring  
This winter show, no dawn disperse the gloom,  
Say, my true guide, my lord, what might shall bring

Back to love's fold these wanderers strayed, and close,  
Imperfect else, life's all-including ring ?

Or shall love's crowning flower, the eternal rose

Of man's innumerable life, else perfect found,  
Wanting of these, its full completeness lose ?"

In doubt I spoke, with sadness compassed round

That aught by love to living conscience brought

Should fade, as fades in air a passing sound.  
But he, my guide, in whose clear sight my thought  
Even to its depths was known, from causeless grief  
Of error bred, soon my delivery wrought.  
And thus, "With golden corn the plenteous sheaf  
In treasured store abides, while idly driven  
By outer blasts is whirled the withered leaf.  
Yet by one dew, one rain, one fostering heaven  
Were both to ripeness brought, though this neglected,  
Upgathered that in balance scales uneven.  
Honoured the life-sustaining grain, rejected  
The barren leaf's decay, yet both one end  
Upgather last, till all by one collected.  
So, for to thee 'tis given, thy vision send  
Through cycled years of time, till closed thy gaze  
Where to one point the lines converging tend.  
Life's countless atoms there, th' unnumbered rays  
Of orb'd existence, first to least and last,  
Make up the keenness of that central blaze.  
There the dead dust of these, in ages past  
Fashionless nameless long, to merest light  
Transformed, as gold by purging fire recast."  
Thus while he spoke, as through the frosty night  
Shiver the wind-blown stars, the plain around  
Glittered each time-worn stone with sparkles bright ;  
And as of opening leaves a rustling sound  
Filled all the place, and 'mid the gravestones seen  
Of those sad forms nor sign nor trace was found :  
Till from my sight, as ne'er such things had been,  
Vanished the graves, the plain ; and pure above  
The light-enwoven dome of heaven serene  
Shone in the radiance of impersonate Love.

## CANTO XXVI

Five Queens, representing different religions, appear : presently they are fused in one—She claims whatever has been good in Judaism, Hellenism, and Christianity.

LORD of my life, star of my childhood's dawn,  
Sun of my manhood's noon, sole fountain thou  
Whence the high verse by thee made mine is drawn,—  
Mightier and more than when from the high brow

Of earth's extremest barrier burst the view  
Of the seven lustral realms, be with me now :  
For other verse and other strains are due

To what remains to tell ; nor slight the task  
That links with visioned shows the substance true.  
But this thou canst and more ; thy hand the mask

Can bind and loose at will, thy skill bestow  
More than my thought can reach or purpose ask.  
For not by Trophon's cave,<sup>1</sup> or Chebar's flow,

Or sea-girt Patmos lone, such vision yet  
Painted in stranger forms its boding show.  
From a green hill a changeful rivulet

Now clear now turbid ran ; its banks beside  
Five damsels throned in sequent order set.  
Meagre the first and stern, her claw-like hand

<sup>1</sup> The Hellenic oracle of Trophonius.

Clutched on a written scroll ; as one from old  
Scornful and scorned, askance the rest she scanned.  
Who next in order sat with gems and gold

A queen of nations seemed ; but form and face  
Were lost to view, shrouded in crimson fold.  
And following her, but by a little space

Parted, and half averse, with sword and lance  
Threatening, a dusky form was third in place.  
But these unlike the fourth ; her sunny glance

Of gentlest purpose told ; the spring-clad mead  
Has not the brightness of her countenance.  
Gorgeous with gems untold and costly weed

Of strange device, the fifth on things afar  
Intent, of those around took little heed.  
Such were the five ; o'er each a tremulous star

Now dim now radiant shone, with doubtful ray  
White as fair peace, or red with crimson war.  
And as the living fires at close of day

Frequent by Indian glades, now bright now dim  
Alternate flash with blank eclipse, so they.  
But the five sister queens nor eye nor limb

Moved where entranced they sat, changeless and still  
Like marble forms in alleys gardens trim.

My guide directs me to record the vision—I see these  
Queens like phantoms before a treasure-cave : as  
dancers move and intermingle,

Thus one by one those shapes, those colours gay

Dazzling the sense, those vestments mystical  
Blended or passed, nor earnest all nor play,  
But fused of each ; for what the immortals call

Earnest is play to men, and mortal mind  
For earnest holds the laughter of heaven's hall.

A strange dream that cannot be unravelled.    Then,  
like clouds at evening,

So one by one those several forms descried

Each on her throne apart, in rival state  
Of jewelled robe distinct and sceptred pride,  
Collected grew to one, that singly great

Summed up the fivefold reign ; to each the face  
Like yet unlike, in a new power elate.

And the five thrones that erst in ordered place

Eternal seemed as those who sat, in one  
But loftier far, were piled and wider space.

And the five stars in several light that shone

In one portentous flared, a meteor flame  
Of doubtful days the dread prognostic known.

But she now throned aloft, sole Queen and Dame,

Whate'er those five divided held of yore,  
Beauty or grace, or lustrous gawd, or name,  
In her one self resumed, and corporate bore

Now this, now that, now 'one, now all of those  
By her summed up, in power and Queenship more.  
Veiled was her face ; in her right hand a rose

Outshone the ruby's glow ; her left a bowl  
Filled with the draught which he who drinks it knows :  
And cross her brows and round her arms a scroll

Writ with a Name of Power, and folded hung  
O'er breast and girdled loins the mystic scroll.  
And far the rose its heavy fragrance flung,

And ruddier glowed the star, while murmuring low  
Like one in passionate trance her lay she sung.

I heard the words, I knew the strain, and thou,

Reader of this strange verse, if chance the strain  
Thou know'st not, bide thy time till given to know.

This was the song ; "From hunger, thirst, and pain,

Hunger for more than bread, and thirst that clings  
Like Oeta's poisonous flame<sup>1</sup> to heart and brain,

To my spread feast, my fountain come ; my wings

Shelter and healing give ; in me the calm

<sup>1</sup> The poisoned robe which consumed Herakles on Mount Oeta.

“Of earth’s unrest, the sum and crown of things.  
Binding in me the bruised, the wounded balm,

The hopeless hope, the dying life, the dead  
True resurrection find and conqueror’s palm.  
By me through thorn-set paths and deserts led

Who from earth’s offered pastures turned aside  
Have on heaven’s grapes and fruits ambrosial fed.  
By me from gilded thrones and marble pride

Of palace towers great kings in eager haste  
Have passed to hermit cave and lone hill-side.  
By me still cloister walls with lilies chaste

Outvie love’s crimson rose ; and caverned wells  
Sweeter than wine in golden goblets taste.  
For mine th’ enchantments, mine the master-spells

That the red torments of the martyr’s pyre  
Can change to soothing dews, so legend tells.  
From the first dawn when the star-spangled quire

Man’s birth proclaimed in song, to the dim close  
When thought and life in earth’s last night expire,  
Still shall the incense clouds, the steams that rose

From altars victim-piled, the hearts of men  
Captive to me, the rapturous joys, the throes  
Of a blind world, my changeless right remain,

Though changed full oft the scheme, in semblance  
new,

As one the moon if wax her form or wane.”

Thus in the several phases—Judaism, Greece in  
the Golden Age, Christianity—has she presented  
herself.



## CANTO XXVII

All nations are seen gathered round the great Queen, whose rays  
bless some and doom others—This difference my guide is  
unable to explain—Suddenly the whole scene vanishes as a  
mirage—The guide smiles, and I see a vision of the new  
Olympian Heaven.

If moments passed or years, where count of time

Was not by days or hours or dialled star,

He may alone declare who to that clime

From things that are not led to things that are.

His be my song to guide, lest rashly driven

Swerve from its course the memory's light poised car.

As o'er the wide encircling green when even

In stillness holds the land, a distant sound

Of homeward birds comes up the twilight heaven,

So from the hill-fenced marge that girt around

The spectral plain, where in proud silence now

Sat the great Queen with fivefold empire crowned,

Gathered a noise, and grew, from bough to bough

As sweeps the forest wave when first the breeze

Fitfully blows the leafy branches through.

And a vast crowd in banded companies

Thronged to that central spot from every side,

Thick as in summer-swarms the blackening bees.

And as the circling rooks at eventide

With clamour fill the grove, so now the cry  
In dissonant tongues to stranger tones allied.

Hither from where the polestar keen and high

Reigns o'er the icebound North, to where the day  
Holds in mid heaven his year-long majesty,  
All tribes, all clans, from earth's prolific clay

Nurtured to human form ; the motley seed  
Of that strange life all other lives obey,  
The sons of Europe's townships and the breed

Of Asia's houseless North, and where the wave  
Casts on reef-margined coasts the ocean weed,  
And where to brigand Spain the Italian<sup>1</sup> gave

A world to spoil and waste ; and, choked with sand,  
Where yawns 'mid arid rocks the Libyan cave,  
And where her long-haired sons the Serian land

Guards with protective fence, and where the morn  
Risen from the deep, Japan, first greets thy strand ;—  
All these, as yellowing leaves by tempest torn,

From Autumn boughs were gathered here, and stayed  
Thick as on English fields the serried corn.  
But these in circles ranged a halo made

Round her, Queen of their night, in mystic change  
Each beyond each in various robes arrayed.

For crimson those who of that pageant strange

Nearest the throne were placed ; a second space  
Gathered in snow-white robes the outer range.

And some with mighty gold, and some with grace

Of green or heavenly blue, and circling these

With duskier garb some held the outmost place.

With eyes upturned, spread hands, and bended knees

They girt the worshipped throne, as those who wait  
Doubtful, yet fixed t' obey, their lord's decrees.

Then was I ware that from the central state

Of her, that kingdom's Queen, a several ray  
Where light with darkness blent and love with hate

<sup>1</sup> Pope Alexander VI.

To each and all was sent : the human clay

Touched by that shaft ethereal grew, the stain  
Of earth by that quick fire was purged away.

O happy those and blest, for little pain

Guerdoned with joys untold, whose glories writ,  
Martyrs or saints, in fadeless light remain !

But some by the same shafts with darkness smit

In evil guise were changed, a ghastly gloom

For nightmare shades and maniac horrors fit.

And still my wonder grew what secret doom

Made of that goodness ill, and why the light

To these deliverance wrought, to those a tomb.

Then thus my Guide ; " The doubt thou own'st aright

None may resolve, till stayed the sequent years

In that last hour that day is not nor night.

Nor meteor gleams of hope, nor shadowed fears

Vex the unsullied calm, the speckless glass

Where mirrored love in formless truth appears.

Not thus what now thou seest, the gathered mass

Of earth-born evil and good, the phantom throng

Beauteous or foul ; nor bide they long, but pass

As rifted clouds low driven are hurled along

In monstrous forms outstretched, that beast, or bird,

Or stranger shape, present when winds are strong,

Or the answering echo of an uttered word

Distort t' uncertain sound, by those below

Listening, as fancy bids, diversely heard.

Not more, while here our feet, is there to know,

Nor mine in words to tell ; what hid remains

Of loftier mount, a mightier power must show."

Thus while he spoke, as spreads on Syrian plains,

Of noontide-steam compact, the imaged lake

That with false hopes mocks the faint traveller's pains,

Where rocks and sand-heaped slopes and clustered brake

In form distinct are seen, and all around

Hills, stones, trees, sands, in tremulous ripples shake ;

So that vast plain, the throne-uprearing mound,  
And she who thereon sat, and they who prone  
Worshipped to the far sight's extremest bound,  
Wavered in flickering lines, till one by one

Each vestment quaint, each form, each symbol token  
In a vague mist wrapped and dissolved were gone ;  
Frost-work by the slant sunbeam thawed and broken,

Smoke-wreaths at noon by rising winds disparded,  
Meaningless words in crowd or market spoken ;  
All things of semblance fair untimely thwarted

By time or fate's decree, earth's spring by frost  
Untimely nipped, hope frustrate, joy departed  
Here seemed in that great wrack ; the promise most,

Least the performance found ; the solid frame  
Night's phantom morn-dispelled, a fleeting ghost.  
As one with sorrow part and part with shame

Smitten I saw and wept, unmindful all  
Whither my path, or where, or whence I came.  
There had I long remained, so dark a pall

O'erspread my heart and brain ; nor from the place  
Had I removed, to mere despair a thrall :  
But as on his shamed child a father's face

Is bent in pitying love, where anger none  
Though much of grief, as for half-shared disgrace,  
Even with such love, so sad, so helpful shone

The pitying smile of him, my lord, my guide,  
Through the thick curtain of that darkness lone.  
I looked ; the mists that veil, the clouds that hide,

The phantom state, the truth in fiction held,  
The shrine misdeemed, the falsehood deified,  
All these like night's ill dreams by morn dispelled,

Seen in that sunlike smile, that countenance  
Perfect in beauty, scattered were and quelled.  
Then turned on me the life-giving smile, the glance

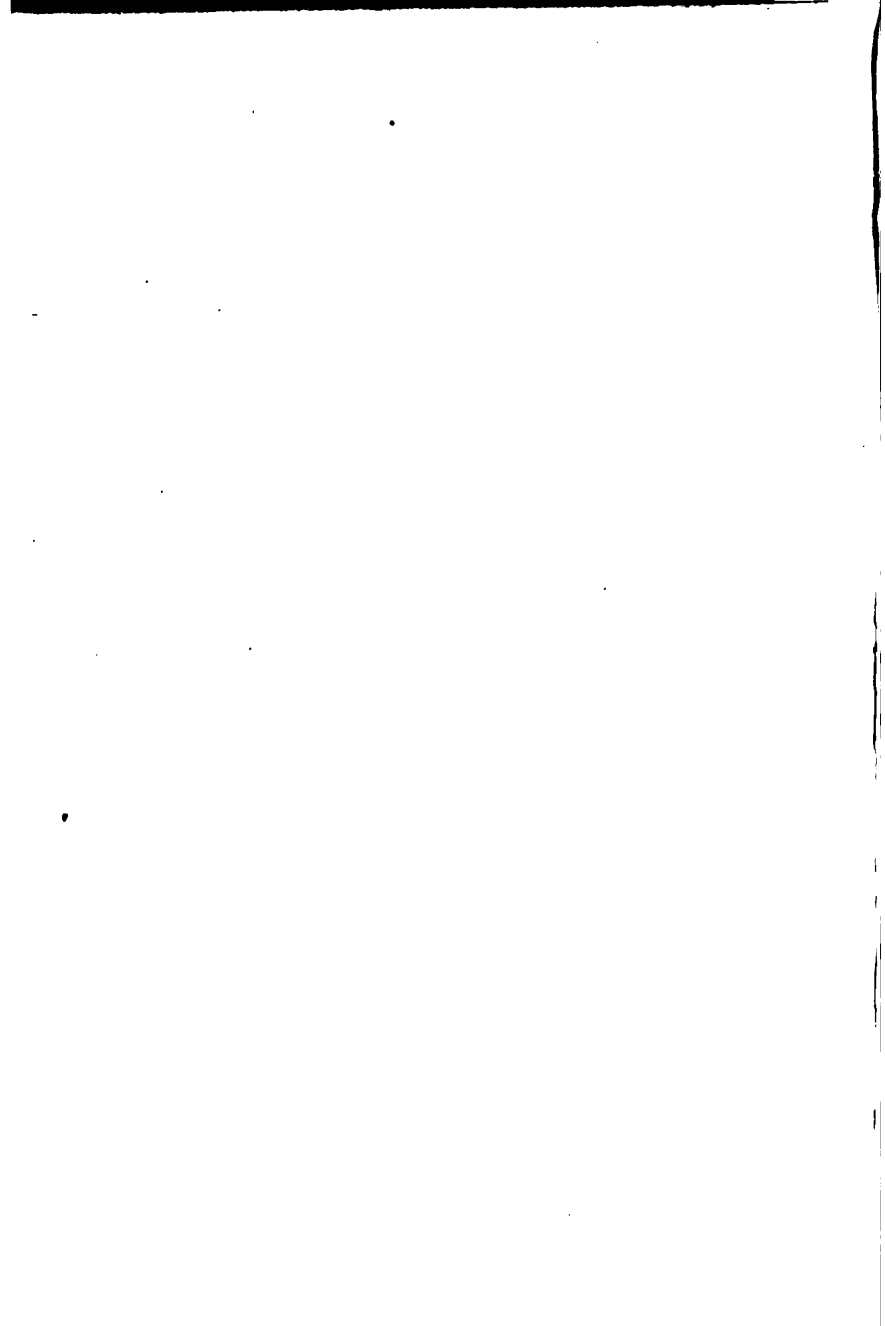
Known to my renovate life ; an instant there  
Oped the far portals of the Olympian trance.

As height surmounting height the marble stair  
In long succession upward winds, till won  
Thy topmost pride, Milan,—so steep, so fair,  
Rose the ascent to where what earth begun  
And marred, renewed I saw ; till, reconciled,  
Semblance with truth and gods with men were one.  
With greener graves, with bluer mountains, smiled  
Another Hellas there, with lovelier shapes  
Peopled, by no false love from truth beguiled.  
A mightier Pan was there ; by summer capes  
A new Dioné gleamed ; brighter the flowers,  
Ruddier the fruits, purpler the mystic grapes.

There too was revealed the King and Conqueror, God  
and Man :

And here the priceless pearl, the Mother Maid,  
Lily and rose of earth, of heaven the gem,  
Goddess and Queen of gods and mortals made.  
And these beside, as round the central stem  
Clusters the petalled flower, in scent and hue  
Flawless, complete, a self-crowned diadem,  
So those great spirits divine, faithful and true,  
In many fanes enshrined, by many a tongue  
Invoked, who to blind men the labyrinth clue  
That heavenward leads 'mid scorn and worst of wrong  
Have freely placed in hand, together blent,  
Here tuned of renovate love the nuptial song.  
As in a dream I heard and saw ; the intent  
In part I knew, but more the depths unknown  
Veiled, as faint stars the day-lit firmament.  
Such changeful scenes and strange the central zone  
Of the lustral realms displayed, that to relate  
In measured verse, or from my song disown,  
I scarce can tell ; but he whose word the gate  
Of life and death unbarred, whose will to mine

Is rule and law, whate'er the deed await,  
Bids me the tale rehearse ; who lists the shrine  
    May enter free, free may the mystery prove  
More often sought than found, the fount divine  
    Quickening dead earth to Eden life and Love.



## BOOK III





## CANTO I

The Fifth Kingdom—I have now passed the realms where the twin-powers of Life and Death reign supreme—A vast wall appears, over which an angel bears us to a fair plain full of light—I regret the less fortunate souls; a strain of music sympathizes with and consoles me—This is the kingdom of true poets and prose-writers, who also wait their final lustration.

PAST are the perilous heights where life with death  
Uncertain balance holds, the road so nigh  
To heaven's own gates, so sheer the gulf beneath,  
Where the twin powers o'er human destiny

For good, for ill supreme, concealed from men,  
Each the hid polestar of a visible sky,  
Orbits of life and death, the pilgrim's ken

Lead and mislead by turns; now each bright ray  
Unerring guides, now wildfires of the glen.

But these and those are left; henceforth the way

By easier courses led completes the ring,  
The twilight border of life's lustral day.

But thou, Lord of my life, leader and king

Of the bright troop where, formed in mystic sign

Latest revealed, the Four<sup>1</sup> their radiance fling,

Assist me now; so may the measured line

<sup>1</sup> The constellation of the Southern Cross.

Aright things seen record, as silvered glass  
Reflects the shades that stain, the lights that shine.  
Spring gales to budding trees, spring showers to grass  
Freshness and life convey, but livelier sent  
Through my dull soul thy quickening currents pass :  
With thee, thou know'st, from my first hour was blent

My spirit's central self, my all ; on thee,  
As on his lord a slave, my eyes are bent.  
Borne by thy might, as o'er th' unfathomed sea

Fleets the white bird of Austral storm, my song,  
O'er all that was or is or is to be,  
Shall touch the outmost bound, secure, nor long

The message given delay, in far-off years  
Lesson and guidance to the mortal throng.  
And now from the dread realm where boundless fears  
With boundless hopes combine, our steps had gone  
Where a high wall its girding barrier rears.

No loftier fence of brick with margined stone  
From the mailed Tartar guards, as travellers tell,  
The hoarded wealth of China's populous zone.  
Then spoke my guide ; " Who reared this barrier well

Their work have done ; what lies beyond to gain  
Nor venturous strength avails nor mystic spell.  
Yet were heaven's mandate unfulfilled, and vain

The path our steps have traced, if thus forbid  
Back we return nor the full course attain."

As by unlooked-for doubt perplexed and chid

In undertone he spoke, the while his look  
To right to left enquired the passage hid.  
But I who from the words uncertain took

More fear perchance than cause, his countenance  
Scanned as a half-taught clown a printed book,  
Nor what I sought discerned ; though still his glance

Went and returned, as o'er some river wide  
Unresting swifts pursue their circling dance.  
Then with such sudden glance as meteors glide

From deep to deep, yet none from whence or where  
 Their course may tell, in Autumn nights descried,  
 Through the mute stillness of th' imprisoned air

Flashed a quick ray, so bright, the lightning beam  
 Ill with that blinding splendour might compare.  
 So flashed on Kishon's banks the harnessed team

That rapt the heavenward seer, its fiery glow  
 Mirrored an instant on that ancient stream.

But other here the shape ; no locks of snow,

No age-worn form was here, but beauty's prime  
 Linked with the perfect life immortals know.

Such the lone shepherd boy<sup>1</sup> upborn sublime

From Ida's heights, while 'mid the rock-strewn plain  
 His flocks unconscious grazed the Phrygian thyme :—  
 Or the bright offspring of Jove's golden rain<sup>2</sup>

Who, Pallas-led, by Libya's haunted shore  
 Broke the dishonour of the virgin's<sup>3</sup> chain :—  
 Or who,<sup>4</sup> his twelvefold toil outwrought and o'er,

By guile not force o'ercome, the cleansing blaze  
 Of Oeta's self-lit pyre to heaven upbore.

Such, but than these more god-like, with bright rays

Crowned, who beside us stood ; the timely power  
 Sent by the Will all other Will obeys.

Wrapt in that splendour round, o'er wall and tower

Light as the feathery down, by winds upwhirled  
 When changed to circlets hoar the purple flower,<sup>5</sup>  
 So light so swift our slanted flight was hurled

Far o'er the extremest verge, the fiery bound  
 To the great riddle of a wildered world.

Till on a meadowed plot of flowery ground

Where with fresh hues was green the grass, descend-  
 ing,

On grateful speech intent I turned me round,

But nought perceived, save with the daylight blending

<sup>1</sup> Ganymede.

<sup>2</sup> Perseus.

<sup>3</sup> Andromeda.

<sup>4</sup> Herakles.

<sup>5</sup> Thistle.

A swift receding gleam, nor e'er anew  
Saw I that form my fated way befriending.  
Then spoke my guide ; " In vain th' enquiring view  
Thou strain'st, in vain thy thought ; a vanished star  
Hid and o'ercurtained by the noonday blue ;  
A nameless flower from nameless realms afar  
Sent by the Love supreme, that mortal clay  
Can lift unscathed to where th' immortals are.  
Silent his power adore, and in thy lay  
Grateful his deeds record ; but most the boon  
Even to the end with duteous toil repay.  
For near the appointed journey's close, and soon  
Shalt thou with us be one ; till then refrain,  
Nor mar with jarring haste th' unfinished tune."  
Thus while he spoke, our path beside the plain  
With pleasant hills distinct, and stream and wood,  
So wrought in beauty's spell, that visioned pain  
And fear and thought of ill, a spectral brood,  
Vanished from memory's trace, as hosts of night  
Chased by the day-star in his conquering mood.  
For fair the landscape showed ; the glowing light  
Sparkled from grass and leaf, in light the hills  
Went up from wood-girt base to crowning height.  
In light the copses green, in light the rills  
Like shredden silver shone, as natural joy  
Through healthful youth, and life through beauty thrills.  
Here sure the dreamed-of rest, from earth's annoy  
Or penal torment free, the golden year  
Nor memoried ill nor present wants annoy.  
New born desire and need their contest dear  
Have here in peace defined ; Elysian shades  
Or chance Utopia's dream or Eden's here.  
Such was my thought while 'mid far opening glades  
The turf-paved path we trod, where never leaf  
Yellows to Autumn's touch nor floweret fades.  
Till of that stillness born a secret grief

Rose to the thought, of those whose sterner doom  
Late seen, from age to age delayed relief,—  
As who with chaplets decked the loved one's tomb

Visits, and mourns the more, that crown nor wreath  
Can bid the dead revive, nor sweet perfume  
Prevail o'er damp decay,—till now my breath

Was heavy drawn with sighs, and the sad mood  
Moistened with tears my downcast lids beneath.  
The while in strange accord from out the wood

Came plaintive sounds and low, a plaint that told  
Not as of present pain but absent good :  
A vague yet true lament, a plaint of old

Heard and unanswered still, as by the swain  
Unmarked the lamb's faint bleat from stony fold.  
But this with sweetest notes the sad complain

Tempered to music's inmost soul, that none  
Listening might scape the witchcraft of the strain.  
All song of modulate voice, all concord won

From well-strung quire of men, with this compare <sup>1</sup>  
Were as mere darkness to the noontide sun.

Then thus my master-guide ; "How calm, how fair,

This portioned realm thou seest, in wondering mind  
That aught of grief should these calm joys impair.

Know then to those, whom from the vulgar kind

The favouring Muse has raised, with various wreath  
Crowning their brows, are these blest groves assigned.  
The poets here, in whose recording breath

Live the dead deeds of men ; or in whose rhyme  
Love ever glows undimmed by age or death.

And with them here the garnered wealth of time

Who stored to later dearth, whose just award  
Apportions meed to virtue, blame to crime.

And here the lords of thought, of wisdom's hoard

Who grasped the difficult keys, of heaven and earth  
Scaled by their toil the heights, the depths explored.

<sup>1</sup> Sic MS.

"All these and else whoe'er of godlike birth

In measured verse or ordered prose have held  
Truth's flawless glass to Nature's mirrored worth,  
In part their guerdon find, though part withheld

Till cleansed each mortal stain, and pure the gold  
From error's dross, and passion's mist dispersed.

And as earth's manifold wrong they mourned of old,

So now their own they mourn, while onward move  
Slow-paced the lustral hours, till wide unfold

Th' eternal gates, the welcome smile of Love."

## CANTO II

I am permitted to see Homer, Dante, Shakespeare ; and in actual vision the scenes of *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Divina Commedia* appear to me—A voice tells how Poetry passed from Homer through Virgil to Dante and Shakespeare.

HE spoke ; attent I stood, till gently laid  
I felt his hand on mine, a warning sign  
That of some near event announcement made.  
The while with gesture quick where densest twine  
The scented bay trees wove, his other hand  
Pointing, to roused expectance gave th' assign.  
Thither my eyes I turned, and soon a band  
In regal garb attired, their forehead crowned  
With empire's wreath for more than empire planned,  
Forth on the pathway came ; with fuller sound,  
But joyous now, the music swelled, and glowed  
With brighter light the heaven, with flowers the ground.  
As who the reverence meet on rank bestowed  
Or birth, or age, accept, so stately these.  
In their own worth complete the pathway trode.  
"With downward brow, veiled eyes, and bended knees  
Adore," so spoke my guide, "as who revealed  
On some high throne the manifest godhead sees.  
High as the mountain tops o'er pastured field,  
O'er common mortals these ; in these to men



"Are heaven's best gifts and last confirmed and sealed.  
And first the Ionian bard,<sup>1</sup> whose equal strain

Of Troy and Greece the hero-gods with praise  
Undying crowns; and ranked with him, the twain<sup>2</sup>  
Co-heirs of sovereign song; the bard whose lays

Measure the world of men,—and whom from hell  
To heaven's high throne Love led through every maze;  
Creators each in turn, to each the spell

Given of truth's inmost hall, to each the treasure  
Of love with life instinct, apportioned well.  
The pulse of fresh-flushed youth, the ordered measure

Of years mature, the ebbing tides of time,  
All hopes, all hates, all loves, all pain, all pleasure  
Their work of witchery wove, as erst to rhyme

By magic chords and song from woven air  
Rose the seven-portalled towers of Thebes sublime."  
More if he spoke I know not, so the awe

Of those three mightiest spirits my every sense  
Bound, that entranced nought else I heard or saw.  
Not long, for now through heart and brain intense

A touch, an impress thrilled, that might the dead  
Rouse ere the hour by life's omnipotence.  
And as th' electric shock in circles led

Gives what its source retains, nor less the spark  
Quickens the extremest pole than fountain-head,  
So my dead self in numbness frozen and dark

Sudden with light and warmth was filled, a ray  
From the far depths, a soul-transforming mark.  
And Ilion's ancient walls, Sigaeum's bay

Present before me showed, nor less my ear  
Rang to the mingled cries of hero-fray,—

The rage of pitiless strife, the sword, the spear,

The madness drunk with blood, the thought that  
yearned

To the far home, the calm resolve and near,

<sup>1</sup> Homer.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare and Dante.

The axe that clove the gates, the fire that burned,

The gods in faction ranked, the fateful doom,

The pride to ruin, the song to wailing turned.

No pictured pageant these, in fancy's loom

Woven, but in present act my soul within

Living were marshalled o'er time's rifled tomb.

But he, that master bard, in whom begin

All notes of song, in whom th' undying strains

Not of man's earth their last fulfilment win

As ocean-born to ocean's breast the rain

In copious joy returns, my wonderment

Smiled to behold, as smile on gaping swains

Great palace lords in state ; then downward bent

My kneeling form he touched ; a world unknown

Oped at that touch, as opes a curtained tent.

There with the wave-tossed chief, whose island throne <sup>1</sup>

Shadows the Adrian wave, the heavy debt

Wandering I paid of Neptune's town <sup>2</sup> o'erthrown ;

Aeaea's moonlit isle, <sup>3</sup> the ambush set

On the siren-haunted rocks, the palace floor

Stained with debauch, with vengeful slaughter wet,

Were mine to share, mine the long-hoarded store

Of absent love with envious hatred crossed,

Mine the sure rest attained, the ultimate shore.

Then as the starry knots of morning frost

Outlined on bark and leaf, as grows the day

Melt into what that beauty first embossed,

So with the forms it showed that lightning ray

Into my being passed, till sightless now

In the heart's self they made incorporate stay.

Fount of Pierian rills ! all streams that flow

Are of thy fullness part ; such power is thine

On thy elect thy selfhood to bestow.

"O ye who with full throat the draught divine

Have quaffed by Arno's banks or Avon's ; ye

<sup>1</sup> Ithaca,

<sup>2</sup> Troy.

<sup>3</sup> Where Odysseus found Circe.

"Heirs of my sway, co-partners of my line,  
Receive this least this last of suppliants ; he,

Child of a later day, may kinship find  
In strains by earlier years denied to me.  
For as progressive suns each several kind

Of choicest fruit to ripeness bring, and each  
With some new sweetness fraught of pulp or rind,  
So years succeeding years in forward reach

Weave the bright strands of song in textured hue  
Changing, as changed the thought, the life, the speech :  
Yet in deep self the same, though seeming new

Songster and audience both, and bides the song  
To its own note, to him that breathed it, true."  
Such words from him who 'mid the minstrel throng

Towers as o'er lesser fanes the giant [fane]  
Where thrones the Fisher-Prince earth's lords among,  
With head bowed down I heard, till once again,

Touched by his hand, I upward looked, and saw  
What fadeless traced abides in memory's grain :  
Such sight as feared rebuke or tongueless awe

Might have forbid my verse, but his command  
Utterance compels whose word is truth and law.  
For now where erst distinct on either hand

That glorious twain I late beheld, the pride  
This of the Ausonian, that of British land,  
A twofold vision glowed ; on either side

A lucid orb it seemed, a thought, a dream  
Than solid earth more real, than heaven more wide :  
An uncreated world poised in the beam

Of all creative light, eternity  
Present in time, o'er time and space supreme.  
The season-tempered earth, the clouds, the sky,

Forest and field, great town, strong citadel,  
Populous mart, fair champaign, mountain high  
Were pictured there, and all around them fell

As a thin veil o'er beauty cast, the haze

Of English summer noons, spell woven on spell.  
But this and these beyond my trancéd gaze

Another orb beheld, unlike the first,  
Substance or dream, night pierced with noonday rays ;  
There of all pain and shameful wrong the worst

To sense or spirit known, the abhorred descent  
To the dark pit, of death th' abode accursed.  
And the revisited stars, and evil shent<sup>1</sup>

By cleansing pains, while round the mystic height  
In hopeful course the heavenward path is bent.  
And those and these beyond, the mansions bright

With God's own manifest love, the universe,  
Maker and made, one inter-radiant light,—  
Terrible vision ; yet by Love's self the verse

Inspired, by Love the tale that heaven and earth  
With hell inweaves in one, bid to rehearse.

O all-embracing song, with golden girth

Clasping in one the whole, O high decree  
From partial throes shaping the renovate birth !  
All being, all lives greatest and least, in thee

Their ultimate goal attain, to unison brought  
In conscient bliss, heaven's sought reality !  
Then as intent I gazed, in eager thought

Searching the depths beyond, as a far land  
O'er limitless steppes by the strayed traveller sought,  
Till ridge on ridge, touched by dim evening's wand

Confused together fade, that vision dread  
Passed, as effaced by touch of mightier hand.  
Yet though unseen, remained, in heart and head

Graven, as in Argive<sup>2</sup> hearts the patriot song  
That age by age to freedom's conquests led.  
Then with reviving strength and effort strong

I broke the bonds of trance, as who from swoon  
Wakes to fresh life his gathered friends among.

<sup>1</sup> Used apparently for *abolished*.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly should be *Spartan*, referring to Tyrtæus.

And one was there who said, "The secret boon  
On earth by Heaven conferred, the instrument  
Tempering all discord to its own sweet tune,  
From Lydia's shore to reed-girt Mantua sent,  
Echoed in silvery notes, with mightier strains  
In Arno's vale by the great Master blent ;  
Till most on Avon's banks and meadowed plains  
To English accents tuned, the magic wove  
Of infinite chords, but bound the golden chains  
That knit earth's spleenful orb to Heaven's great  
Love."

### CANTO III

Napoleon III and others in great place I have seen ; but I was never received by any with such favour as by the two poets with whom I am now standing—Beatrice smiles on me, and Dante resolves some perplexities in regard to the *Commedia*.

HIM of his name the third, from frontiered Rhine  
To Western seas who ruled, till dark Sedan  
Closed o'er the sunset of Ajaccio's line,  
And him th' incarnate Fate, by men the man  
Of iron named and blood, whose master hand  
Perfected last what Teuto's fight<sup>1</sup> began,  
Have I beheld ; and who fair Europe's land  
Cleansed from Gaul's earlier swarm, where seared  
and riven  
By th' iron hail thy oaks, green Ardennes, stand :—  
And him, the thrice-crowned Head to whom is given  
In God's own place to throne, the penal doom  
To bind or loose, sole link of earth and heaven,  
Present have I revered ; Eternal Rome,  
What power is like to thine ? what palaced pride  
Can match the Martyr's shrine, the Fisher's tomb ?  
—All these have I beheld, and more beside,  
Heroes of earth or lords ; nor converse due  
With such, nor greeting hands, has fate denied.

<sup>1</sup> Arminius defeated Varus, B.C. 9, in the Teutoberg wood.

But ne'er in access bland or reverent view

Have I such favour found as when that hour  
Midmost I stood between th' immortal two ;  
One in their kinship made ; so willed the power,

Lord of my spirit's birth, with subtle skill  
Tending to ripened fruit th' entrusted flower.  
No vain Pieria this, no fabled hill

Of yore Parnassus named,—voiceless and lone  
Those heights, and dry the Heliconian rill,—  
But the true founts of song, the secret known

To the hid gods of earth ; the magic pale  
Closed to all else, allowed to these alone.  
As who by power divine from pain and bale

Secure of old in hottest furnace stood,  
Girt with the tyrant fires of Dura's vale,  
So 'mid that splendour I ; the mystic flood

In brightness whelmed my sense, nor thought nor  
word

Was mine to frame, childlike by awe subdued.  
Till as from distance borne a voice I heard,

But whose I knew not yet, that like swift flame  
Kindling to new delight my spirit stirred.

And, "What thy inmost wish, secure of blame  
Or dull reproof, declare, that question made  
Meetly, to meet reply may give proclaim."

As one by inward force constrained, afraid,

Yet in consentment glad, so wrought the sound  
On my charmed sense, I the command obeyed.

But first my dazzled eyes that long the ground  
Had sought, to upward gaze unapt, I raised  
As to his master's face the wistful hound.

There in full view with equal splendour blazed

The suns of earth's true heaven, the glorious twain  
All heights above, fittest by silence praised.

And both my gaze returned, nor by disdain

Was dimmed the brightness of that smile that shone

In the clear eyes, love's, beauty's, life's, domain.  
But most in his through whom the memoried stone<sup>1</sup>

By flower-crowned Mary's dome<sup>2</sup> is honoured more  
Than Memnon's shrine, or Caesar's laurelled throne.  
Serious his look, and sad the garb he wore

With exile dust besoiled ; but of strange flowers  
A triple crown inwove his forehead bore.

For some with crimson glow the fiery towers

Of Pluto called to mind, and some the green  
Of the upward mount, some, gold from Eden bowers.  
At his right hand who seemed of Heaven the Queen<sup>3</sup>

In perfect beauty shone ; nor turned aside  
His look from hers, nor hers from his was seen.  
Lord of the Song Divine, Etruria's pride,

O Dante, thine the form, and hers with thine  
By love eterne conjoined and deified.

Low at the knees of him whose mighty line

Writ the whole heart of love, prostrate I bowed  
As bows the pilgrim at th' all-worshipped shrine.

Dante gives me encouraging words, and recognizes me  
as his follower.

"But rare all precious things, and scant the band

Attent to heaven's responsive notes, and few

The voice who mark, or hearing, understand.

Yet, as from distance struck, confusedly true

Echo repeats the sounds to listening ears

Which grant of melody's maze the guiding clue,

So the wide waste across of sundering years

The meaning of my song, the ninefold chain

<sup>1</sup> Sasso di Dante.

<sup>2</sup> S. Maria del Fiore, the Duomo of Florence.

<sup>3</sup> *a Queen* appears as an alternative reading in the MS. As Beatrice, not the B.V.M., is intended, *a* for *the* is probably correct.



“Reached from all deeps to the empyrean spheres.  
But thou whose feet this intermediate plain

’Twixt world and world, have trod, no more afar  
May’st note by note drink in the perfect strain.”

Thus while he spoke, as on the Eastern bar

In molten silver quivering through dark air,  
Outleaps the brightness of morn’s herald star,  
From her whose crescent<sup>1</sup> smile from stair to stair

Of heaven led up the ascent, a glance there shone  
Such as in love’s best page recorded are.

O smile all smiles above, O beauty shown

But to th’ elect of heaven, O gentle light,  
Pure emanation of the sapphire throne,  
Can tongue avail to tell, can pen to write,

What I beheld in thee? when first thy ray  
For dimness splendour gave, for blindness sight.  
As who ’mid stranger tongues his toilsome way

Seeks to beguile with speech, but to his thought  
Finds not the words that others hearken may,  
So now the vision, that seen, such wonders wrought

Of renovate heart and life, my faltering song  
Halts to declare, that music’s notes untaught.  
Then he, the patriot bard, whom faction’s wrong

Gave to an exile’s tomb, where Adria’s wave  
Floods the sad marsh Ravenna’s walls along,  
Once more his word resumed; “To thoughts that crave

Reply, be answer given; the hidden seed  
Shall in the manifest flower its fullness have.  
Nor unresponsive thou, nor slow to read

The cyphered signs of truth, nor now to learn,  
Heaven-taught of yore, the things of heaven hast need.  
But this thy doubt remains, my spirit’s urn

What fountain filled with living draught, what brand  
Lit in my verse the fires that quenchless burn:  
And if by earthly airs with me was fanned

<sup>1</sup> Always increasing in sweetness.

“She of my verse the soul, or if her name  
Be but a mask of other purport planned.  
Know then of earthly mould that peerless dame  
Whom Love assigned my queen, in breathing form  
Our native town, our earth, our sky the same  
With fleshly vesture clad, with life-blood warm,  
Though more than mortal fair ; such perfect grace  
Was hers, each word, each smile, each gest, each  
glance.

Yet not that gentle port, that angel face,  
Wrought on my life the spell ; a mightier chain  
Than earthly love might forge was here in place.  
For know whome’er the fateful Powers ordain

Poet or seer, to such is given for guide  
A visible type of Love’s all-quickenning reign.  
Else might the sense divine for man too wide  
Formless remain, and vague, and random all  
The marksman’s keenest shaft, fit aim denied.  
Thus in the mirror aptly placed, though small,

Is seen the giant sun, and gathered shine  
Dazzling the rays that else unheeded fall.  
So was all human worth, all truth divine,

Mirrored in her to me, herself my theme,  
Centre and brightness of the encircling line.  
In her fulfilled Love’s utmost law, the dream

Bodied in wakeful truth, herself the glass  
Transfused with brightness of th’ eternal beam.  
Nor other now heaven’s law ; the thing that was

Is and shall be, till every type receive  
Fullness, and mortal to immortal pass.

But thou fulfil thy task assigned, nor grieve

By seeming change perplexed or true love’s wrong,  
And what thou mourn’st, delayed, not lost, believe.”

Thus while he spoke, my brother guide, who long,

As who sweet music hears, and waits, intent  
Lest sound or sign jar on the chords of song,

On me such aspect turned, as pity, blent  
With love's approval, wreathes, that the quick blood  
Up to my face from my full heart was sent ;  
And as by lightning flash I understood  
Signed in that life my own, as fits the glove  
Drawn on the wearer's hand, and through the wood  
Rang out the triumph chaunt of conquering Love.

## CANTO IV

Invocation to the poet's unnamed and mystic Beatrice—Shakespeare, with Ideal Beauty by his side, appear : he is silent : I do him reverence—By a clear stream I now see Musaeus, and with him a crowd of true poets of all ages.

O ONCE and ever loved, to whom the flower  
Of my closed heart in life's first morning smit  
Oped to the fullness of thy quickening power,  
In roseate hues of joy and fragrance, fit  
For thee whose gifts were these, till failed withdrawn  
From the dull earth the vision shaming it ;  
If in this verse thy name, that to my dawn  
Was the bright morning star, as hers proclaimed  
By angel songs on Eden's mystic lawn,  
Unspoken bide, my silence, haply blamed  
By some, with thee shall pardon find, for thou  
Not in their world but thine art rightly named.  
'Neath their own ashes laid more hotly glow  
Love's altar fires, but to the common ray  
Made bare, like coals dispersed their heat forgo :  
Not so, not so, thy praise ; thy presence aye  
Nameless shall names outlive, even in this song  
Made one with love, as starlight merged in day.

And now the voice that Arno's vale along

Love first attuned, had ceased, and distant heard  
Breathed a new chaunt the forest trees among.  
Nor nearer drew the sound, but as a bird

Flutters a ruffled wing, then stays, the trees  
Quivering to the far sound responsive stirred.  
As one who feels a presence near, yet sees

Nothing, though strained his gaze, while vague belief  
Peoples the void with fancied images,  
So 'mid that forest I ; each branch, each leaf,

Seemed conscious of the unseen, till even what fear  
Might there suggest, revealed, had brought relief.  
Then was I ware of him on earth whose peer

Has been not nor shall be, o'er all supreme,  
Polestar and zenith of the human sphere.  
But as the faint presentment of a dream

Was that divinest form, and dim the face  
Scarce seen as though by moonlight's doubtful gleam.  
And close beside, but yet more faint in place,

A pure perfection stood, a beauty veiled  
In its own light, that none the form might trace,—  
Two wonders blent in one ; my spirit quailed

As on the twain I gazed, and sense and mind  
Dazzled and weak from that great vision failed.  
Then spoke my guide, "Whate'er of greatness joined

To beauty and perfect life, whate'er the power  
That fashioned man has to men's world assigned,  
All precious things of earth, heaven's bridal dower,

Mirrored in Shakespeare dwell, in him the spring  
Of the great deep, in him Love's inmost bower.  
His the waked songs of morning, his the wings

That beat heaven's answering gale, in him alone  
Centred all highest aims, all noblest things."

Then as before some monarch's sovereign throne

The herald guides some stranger's step, from far  
In reverence come that worshipped power to own ;

So by my master led, my guide, my star,  
Teacher and Lord, in lowliest guise I bowed  
To him the polestar of man's ultimate bar.  
But he, as through dull veil of envious cloud  
On earth's expectant face the glorious Sun  
Cheerly looks forth in his bright self avowed,  
So where I lowly knelt that kingly one  
Deigned to look down in grace ; a smile, a look  
Perfecting all by the elder twain begun.  
As to keen student eyes a well-writ book  
Open its tale declares, so nature's whole  
In that one smile clear form and meaning took.  
Till to that vision's self transformed, my soul  
Other than first I knew, to these subdued,  
Earth's glory, nature's crown, art's ultimate goal.  
Such close the vision found ; and if too rude  
My verse, and halt the line, marvels to show  
Wider a range than earth's, and higher mood,  
Be in themselves th' excuse ; too deep the flow  
For line or lead, the mountain peaks too high  
For aim, too slight the shaft, too weak the bow.  
"But ne'er," so rang the voice, "shall mortal eye,  
As yet by death unsealed, the godlike three  
Again behold in veil-less majesty.  
But thou who them hast seen, go forth ; to thee  
The secret told retain ; to every maze  
The clue thou hold'st, to every door the key."  
Such words I heard, but knew not whence ; amaze  
Held me enthralled awhile ; till to my thought  
Answered the star-crowned guardian of my ways,  
And said, "Thus far by thy hid birthright brought  
Hast thou the lords beheld, by Will divine  
Monarchs and makers of the world of thought.  
Now forward lies thy way where gathered shine,  
Lesser though bright, in the quired firmament,  
The associate splendours of the starry Nine.

“ But first thy mortal sight bedazed and shent  
By sight’s excess, by friendly power restored  
Must what remains in its true guise present.”  
Thus spoke the brother-guide, and to the word  
Shaping the deed, a narrow pathway took  
Towards a glad sound of many waters heard ;  
Till by a green descent and cool a brook  
Sparkled our eyes before, and at the edge  
Stood one of vestment white and reverend look.  
Still as the watchful bird on bush or hedge  
Slant o’er the stream, he stood ; with asphodel  
Circled his hair entwined with greenest sedge.  
Then spoke my guide, “ Of whom old glories tell,  
Musaeus<sup>1</sup> here thou seest ; apt guardian he  
O’er the pure stream fed by Castalia’s well.  
All other sons of song, the Imperial Three  
Whom late thou saw’st alone except, his state  
Willing attend, and grace his sovereignty.”  
This said, to that grey form of dateless date  
My steps he led, where by the guarded wave  
Th’ expectant shades his sign permissive wait.  
Nor long that sign delayed ; with aspect grave  
Yet glad the welcome given, as might beseem  
His son<sup>2</sup> whose charm unsealed the pitiless grave.  
Not with more zest the wain’s o’erlaboured team  
Haste to the cooling ford than I, to slake  
My thirst of sight, stooped to the healing stream.  
From a far world derived those waters take  
Virtue, by him bestowed from whom the spheres  
In circling course their ninefold music make.  
Then sudden as th’ uncurtained stage appears  
With moving shapes alive, the sight that fill  
With the feigned pageant of imagined years,

<sup>1</sup> A mythical poet, to whom a similar place is given in the *Sixth Aeneid*.

<sup>2</sup> Musaeus in one legend is son to Orpheus.

So where till then green valley, copse-grown hill,  
Had silent seemed and void, my wondering eye  
Such vision saw that the remembrance still  
Quickens my pulse with joy : an hour that I

Treasure a gift for aye, till once again  
Converse be mine with that bright company.  
All whom the Muse from out the sons of men

Has chosen and marked her own, whom deathless  
song

Themselves has deathless made, were there in ken.  
From the young years when erst to mortal tongue

Was measured utterance given, to latest time  
Of earth, sere bays, clipped speech, and notes unstrung,  
Present were gathered there ; from the blue clime

Of famed Ionia's crest, to where the tide  
On Thule's shores lay tranced to Runic rhyme ;—  
Th' Athenian stage, Elea's victor pride,<sup>1</sup>

Thy bards, imperial Rome, the shepherd lay  
Of fair Trinacria's hills,<sup>2</sup> I there descried.  
Nor less, though offspring of a feebler day,

Italia's lyric bard, or who the tale  
Of knightly deeds inwove with fiend or fay.<sup>3</sup>  
There too the seraph bard of Eden's vale

Somewhat apart I saw ; upraised his eyes,  
Not sightless now, to heaven, and forehead pale.  
Then spoke that white-robed seer, "In other skies

Throned the impersonate Power, from whom proceed  
To man, thought, music, life, love, everything,  
Here in these bowers from earth remote the meed

Has placed of passionate song, till pure the flame  
Mount to its source, for harvest ripe the seed.  
And some their lays attest ; and some to fame

Known, but unknown their uttered verse ; and  
some,

<sup>1</sup> Pindar.

<sup>2</sup> The Sicilian Idyllists.

<sup>3</sup> Petrarch, perhaps ; Ariosto, Tasso, and others.



"Fresh-graved the song, effaced the songster's name,—  
But all eternal found : till closed the sum

Of fadeless bays in perfect chaplets wove,  
Crowning the lord of song ; to him they come  
A bridal quire, where music weds with Love."

## CANTO V

England in Shakespeare has the greatest of all poets—His successors flit by : Pope, Byron, Shelley, Keats—Their future suggested—I now hear myself named by my Mother ; S. T. Coleridge appears, and in return for my early admiration, fostered by her, tells me the secret of the vale of poets ; their nobleness, their joy, grief, and final perfected state.

EMPRESS and nurse of nations, of my birth

Cradle, even mine, what name, what greatness, say  
Can match with thine ? what likeness thine on earth ?  
Since of the noblest three our being's day

Has given o'er minds to rule, the noblest one  
Is thine, the mightiest power, the keenest ray.  
England, this glory thine ; the circling sun

That sets not on thy bounds, even there has seen  
Or man or god greater than Shakespeare none.  
Yet not alone in him thy laurels green

Ever abide ; his court a sequent band  
Ever attend, as stars in heaven's serene.

Nor these were absent now ; at his command,

A warbling flight, they came, whoe'er by song  
Tuned to high thought have gladdened English land.  
And some I knew for smoothest line, yet strong,

Rightly renowned, to whom the well-earned bays  
Of noblest thought in balanced verse belong :

But chiefly he whose guarded grot surveys

The royal stream where midway bends his flow  
From Windsor's bowers to London's chartered maze ;  
And following these, but varied more, in show

Of brightness robed or shade, in mood and brain  
Kin yet diverse, thy late-born minstrels go.

But foremost he<sup>1</sup> who Othman's despot chain

From renovate Greece, with trumpet call that woke  
Dull Europe, strove t' unbind, nor strove in vain ;  
Who first the sword unsheathed, who first the yoke

Smote till it burst, till Missalonghi claimed  
The passionate life outworn, the heart that broke.

O hero bard in times degenerate famed

Sole undegenerate thou, like him of yore  
Of a saved Greece the true Tyrtaeus<sup>2</sup> named !  
Close by his side an angel form, yet more

Than fancied angels fair, whom bigot hate  
Drove from the British to the Ausonian shore,  
Poet of light and life ; too soon the date

To thy sea-spousals given ; by swift decree  
With Lycidas and Hylas linked thy fate.

Nor absent thou from that fair company,

Love-smit Seléné's<sup>3</sup> bard, for the harsh earth  
Too sweet thy song's interfluous melody.

And others next I saw, by kindred birth

Sharers with these in fame, that kindled here,  
To earth's dim memories brightness gives and worth,  
Till the great winter of the secular year

In frozen silence reign, and withered man  
From the dead branch drop off a leaflet sere.

Not thus the world beyond, the eternal plain

Where bide the ethereal lamps, eclipsed below

<sup>1</sup> Byron.

<sup>2</sup> The Athenian poet who encouraged the Spartans in the second Messenian war.

<sup>3</sup> Refers to the *Endymion* of Keats.

Till perfect made in heaven what earth began.  
But the green meads where living waters flow

Their sure abode are given, and else whate'er  
On those they love the worshipped gods bestow,  
Are theirs to the end of time ; such harvest bear

The seeds of god-given song : with its high merit  
In just appraisement weighed, may nought compare.  
This portion none receives but he whose spirit

Kindled with other flame, than earth's, and made  
One with that flame, may its pure source inherit.  
From the cool shadows of a willowy glade

Somewhat apart, where curved the gliding stream,  
Were to my listening ear these words conveyed :  
And from beneath the boughs such steady gleam

As yields the glow-worm's spark, but this more bright  
Of sapphire hue sent forth a lovely beam.

As who 'mid summer lawns some new delight

Of flower or crimson fruit beholding, stays  
His onward step, till satiate made his sight,  
So on that star-like spark I fixed my gaze,

While, as responsive thought to thought, more clear  
Full on me turned shone forth those gem-like rays ;  
Till, sense with sense accordant now, my ear

Took in the uttered name, that gently spoken  
By one from childhood's days, had power to cheer.  
Hers was the voice, the word ; nor other token

Of her was needed there ; the love I knew  
By the great chasm 'twixt world and world unbroken.  
For loves to loves succeed, and old to new

Yields as a wave-chased wave, but this may change  
not

More than by cloud-rack heaven's enduring blue.  
A mother's love that heaven ; its courses range not,

To their first tracement true ; its circling hold  
Absence and care and death itself estrange not.  
I knew the present power, the charms of old

Around me wove their spell, till where I stood  
Back to its source my being's stream was rolled.

There on the marge of that clear-watered wood

His form I saw, whose phantom-haunted lay<sup>1</sup>  
Told the just vengeance of ill-squandered blood.

Calm was his face, the slips of silvery grey

Shadowed a youthful smile, from his clear eyes  
Shone the calm brightness of an Autumn day.

"The love that to my verse in childish wise,"

Thus were his words ; "was thine ; the spirit's dawn,  
Unveiled by her whose influence now supplies

Unseen the good thou seest, my form has drawn

From the calm rest of satiate thought to teach  
What the hid virtue of this secret lawn.

This by thy inmost thought, thought mute to speech,

Questioned I know ; but all too dull thy ken

The truth to see, too short thy grasp to reach.

With joys exceeding those to dying men

By niggard earth allowed, thou seest around  
Filled all the vale, flower-crowned each denizen ;

Yet in thy ears such notes of plaintive sound

As tell of inward grief, like wormwood poured  
In sweetest draught, the perfect joy confound.

Why, you ask, is not their lot perfect ?

Know then whate'er its natural element

Outgoes, to higher life sublimed and signed,

Measures its pain even by its joy's extent.

For not unscathed beyond its natural kind

May life its orb dilate, nor free from smart

Mingles the mortal with th' immortal mind.

Life gives many examples of this alloy of good by evil

Nor 'mid the world of dreams whose marge is death

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

"Idly by men called life, is given to weave  
From thorn or canker free the Poet's wreath.

And who from the high gods the most receive

Must most in count repay ; and oft the morn

In brightness risen declines to cloud-stained eve.

And some with fairest hues of verse the thorn

Of personal hate have dressed, and to the strings

Of love's sweet lyre have tuned the notes of scorn.

And some, nor few their tale, ethereal wings

Have limed with purchased clay, and their high dower,

Ill barterers they, exchanged for earthly things.

And some with hasty hands the delicate flower

Of love have rudely grasped, till rest of grace

In blameful ruin lies love's sheltering bower.

And some, the noblest these, though nought of base

Has marred their work divine, yet seeing mourn

Earth's limitless wrong, life's error, love's disgrace,

And conquered good by conquering ill o'erborne,

And love by hate, and life by death ; and joy

Prelude to pain, and hope of hope forlorn—

Desolate all, and the fair world a toy<sup>1</sup>

Tossed in a demon's play, and sovereign fate

Powerless to save, all-powerful to destroy.

So memory love's bright rays with gloom of hate

Darkens awhile, till by alternate change

The perfect mind attains its destined state.

Such law contains us here ; nor think it strange

If joy with grief combine ; th' Elysian grove

The portal this, no more ; the outward range

Of the hid rest where life is one with Love."

<sup>1</sup> "Ἀνθρωπος . . . θεοῦ τι παλινιον : Plato, *Laws*, Book VII.

## CANTO VI

Passing into another landscape, I at first see no one—My guide explains that here are the Historians, themselves little known personally in their own time—They then appear ; Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus—Then a motley crowd of divers races : Gibbon among them eminent.

To the vexed thought erewhile that anxious held  
My mind, the poet-sage such answer meet  
Portioned, till loosed each knot, each doubt dispelled.  
Nor longer stayed discourse, his work complete  
At her behest, who to Pieria's rill,  
Truest of guides, first led my childish feet.  
Silent my guide and I the sacred hill  
Circled with reverent step, till reached the bound  
Where those great spirits their lustral doom fulfil.  
Before us now with matted turf the ground  
Rose in ascending slope, and up the steep  
In curve alternate traced the footpath wound.

It was a weary ascent ;

Till on the mountain head where rock nor tree  
Parted the view we stood ; beneath the land  
Showed as the ridges of a wind-blown sea :  
Part seen but more concealed, with frequent band

Of interposing mist, a shifting shroud  
By air and light woven in illusive strand.  
But overhead nor vaporous mist nor cloud  
Stained the pure heavens, and dark the central blue  
A silent vault to the pale margin bowed.

We reach the summit, but see no sign of life anywhere.

Then thus my guide ; " Whom thou desir'st to see,  
Lords of the mount our steps have climbed, more near  
Are than thou think'st, though hidden yet from thee.  
Little on earth beheld or marked, even here

Not oft revealed to sight, their honoured meeds  
Not in themselves but what they wrought appear.  
For these in history's pictured scroll the deeds

Of gods made act in men, the bright ones hid  
By their own light have clothed in mortal weeds.  
These the dulled seeds of fire, awhile forbid

By cold earth's numbing frost, th' o'ercrusted death  
Uplift, as spring flowers burst the coffin lid.  
Fostered by these to renovate life and breath

The nations wake from sleep, till the great past  
From its own memories winds the present wreath.  
But they the flame who fanned, the summoning blast

Who blew, themselves unmarked the most remain,  
Lost in the shade by their own trophies cast."  
Then I beheld as when the autumn plain

Darkens to night, and from the fallow ground  
Turning, the peasant plods his cot to gain,  
From blackening heaps of weeds with care around

Piled o'er the exhausted furrows, one by one  
Comes out in ruddy light each smouldering mound,—  
So on that height where form or likeness none

Late I perceived, a crowned and sceptred throng  
Like, yet distinct, in kingly lustre shone.

Their kingship always abides ; their judgments stand.



And now my view before in order set  
Ranged the great lords of sceptred history,  
Senate of Time, on Time's high mountain set.

As the loftiest tree in a forest, or summit in a mountain  
range,

Four giant ones stood forth in central show.  
And foremost one who eldest seemed, arrayed  
In Dorian garb of massive fold, his head  
Circled a ninefold wreath of myrtle braid.  
But o'er those aged limbs and brows were shed  
Gleams of immortal youth, in Cambrian dell  
Like some old oak with magic flowers o'erspread.  
And next in soldier guise attired, that well  
Beseemed his stern aspect, th' Athenian chief  
Held forth to view a blood-stained chronicle  
Of ill-assorted power, and splendour brief;  
Bright dawn of storm-vexed day,—the Maenad<sup>1</sup> blast  
To blighted Hellas floweret left nor leaf.  
Sociate with these, but third in order, past  
Who honoured lived and long where Padua's towers  
O'er the great plain their storied shadows cast :  
Till to the she-wolf's brood whate'er the hours  
Had brought of weal or bale, from Sylvia's son<sup>2</sup>  
To Caesar's line, their heirloom bides and ours.  
Last of the four, yet 'mid that band to none  
Second in grave aspect, a shape with night  
Clothed, as it seemed, and storm, came slowly on.  
With blood and shame besmirched the scroll his right  
Grasping in part concealed, with Roman crime  
By Rome on Rome avenged the page was dight.  
And these beyond whose spell in prose, or rhyme  
Kindred to prose, to imaged steadfastness

<sup>1</sup> Fury.

<sup>2</sup> Romulus.

Have charmed the restless waves of onward time :  
A motley throng they came, in form and dress

Of Goth or Celt or Slav or Teuto's race :  
Various as when by tides compelled or stress  
Of long opposing winds, some harbour's face  
With myriad flags confused appears, in hue  
Diverse and form, compelled from every place.  
And eminent these amidst [in] nearer view

Him who the gathering shades of ancient Rome  
From morn till midnight gloom pourtrayed I knew.  
As matchless reared the Tuscan artist's<sup>1</sup> dome

All lesser piles by Tiber's banks upreared  
Dwarfs in compare, its founder's pride and tomb ;  
So 'mid the throng of lesser days appeared

He who that task fulfilled, where Leman's lake  
Mirrored the rest by lifelong toil endeared.  
For as deep waters just reflection make

Of converse skies and bordering heights, that ever  
Pourtrayal apt on the calm surface take,  
While all distort in restless whirl and quiver

Colour and form and light confusedly blent  
Are dashed and lost adown the restless river ;  
So to their gaze alone whose calm content

Is fixed on the wider orb, our little day  
Views a mere point in time's wide firmament,—  
Is given in changeless truth and apt array

Earth's fleeting shapes, like leaves by whirlwind blast  
When Autumn rides the tempest, to pourtray.  
So by the elder four, by this the last

But worthiest, wrought in hardest ore the throne  
For the Colossus of the Imperial past.

The golden head, the silver breast, the zone  
Brazen, the feet with clay debased, a mass  
Shapeless in common dust have passed o'erthrown.  
And but the likeness drawn on history's glass,

<sup>1</sup> Michel Angelo, architect of the dome of S. Peter's.

That bides when gone the substance, nought were left  
In aught that is to know the all that was.  
Of lesser things and feebler stuff the web  
Is woven of later days, a trivial show,  
Of honour, strength, grace, loveliness bereft.  
With Athens, Sparta, passed the morn ; the glow  
Of noon with Rome declined, the clouds of night  
Now o'er monotonous plains their shadows throw.

Yet a light from Love on high shines on them.

## CANTO VII

We descend the mount and rest in a bower—Explanation why so few great historians have existed, especially in later times—I see Plutarch, who leads us through a mystic region where strange music is heard.

Even here time existed for me, and too short was that permitted, yet there was much to learn which I cannot reveal.

As on far wandering bound at fall of night  
Who leaves his birth-place home, and knows the  
morn  
Shall find him far from each loved sound or sight,  
Slow with such strain as self from self were torn  
He leaves the darkened porch ; a lonely road  
Stretches before to distant lands forlorn.  
Such was my thought as silent both we trod  
The winding curves, the long descent that led  
To the green margin of the level sod.  
And still with many thoughts oppressed my head  
Downward I held, the while my careful guide  
Through the dense copse my sightless footsteps led.  
Till gently from the common path aside  
Turning, his hand on mine he placed, and drew  
Towards a recess that in the forest side

Showed as a cave, so thick the branches grew  
Around and overhead, nor noontide beam  
Pierced to the grass wet with perennial dew,  
But violet-sprinkled turf betwixt, a stream

Clearer than diamond flowed ; no sound was there  
But through far boughs the blue jay's sudden scream.  
In such, no other glade, Elissa<sup>1</sup> fair

By Priam's vagrant son was seen, alas,  
When sight was one with love, love with despair.  
Then where in music fell the liquid glass

Poured on a rocky shelf, awhile to rest  
We leant, 'mid purple flowers and thymy grass.  
But I of mysteries hid the former quest

Resumed in silent thought, till urged by him  
The doubt foreknown my questioning words expressed.

Then he ; "Of earthly sense the twilight dim

Yet hangs thy view before, as lost in haze  
Uncertain forms perplex the horizon rim.  
The mighty record of earth's nobler days

Hast thou revered in these, the immortal band  
Who link with Rome and Hellas England's praise.  
Yet bides thy thought perplexed, the builder's wand

Why given to only these ? fulfilled the feat  
By these alone, by others idly planned ?  
Mark then, to each design in act complete

With cunning hand conjoined and steadfast will  
Must in fit purpose apt material meet.  
Nor wanting these can nature's self fulfil

Whate'er the task designed, nor human wit  
Of these deprived attainment wed with skill.  
And still to noblest form must substance fit

In apt accord combine, with golden pen  
On golden base should golden deeds be writ.

<sup>1</sup> Dido.

The truly great historians are on the mount, and their records are eternal. The world has since degenerated, and History with it.

“ But ere their memory passed, the abiding Power  
Whom at these gates thou sawest, lest envious Time  
Fabled yet true should his own birth devour,  
From those who history's mount with toil to climb  
Have striven, her favourites chose in mindful charge,  
Co-heirs and guardians of her memoried prime.  
These in her shrine she thrones ; the rest at large  
On lesser hearts intent and emperies  
Ephemeral, hold the mount's uncertain marge,  
Save him <sup>1</sup> who from contempt of old surmise  
Redeemed Boeotia's name, of hero-worth  
Chronicler true, with life's best wisdom wise.  
Sad Chaeronea's boast, th' ancestral earth  
Her treasurer finds in thee ! through thee to teach  
All the slow years recount of nobler birth.”

He welcomes us : my guide replies : Plutarch leads us  
on.

He spoke, and turning led where close the bough  
O'erarching passage gave, nor might the way  
Passage to uncompanioned step allow,  
So thick the sidelong fence, nor glimpse of day  
Divide the vaulting green ; and all beneath  
Year strewn on year the withered leafage lay.  
Here death with life alternate, life with death,  
Join in fraternal rule, and, green or sere,  
Summer with winter weaves a chequered wreath.  
As who mis-strayed at even in lonely fear  
Wanders by unknown paths where landmark none  
Nor watch-dog's bark, nor sound of human cheer,

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch.

And thinks, Alone till night's long course be run

Here must I stay ; then with fantastic dread  
Shudders, if ne'er arise on earth the sun ;  
Such thoughts or like were mine, as slow my tread

Followed our self-given guide, whose awful shade  
Unseen yet felt, silent our pathway led.  
And as in opiate sleep the act essayed

Void of effect remains, so frustrate seemed  
Our task, endless the toil, unreal the glade.  
And if in truth we journeyed there or dreamed

I knew not then, nor cared, in drowsy trance  
Of a strange spell the captive unredeemed.  
Then a far sound of silver resonance

Pulsed on the heavy air, not such as tells  
Haply of soldier pomp or circling dance,  
But the faint tone that from high minster bells

Dies with the dying day, or midnight chaunt  
Borne on the organ-wave from hermit cells :  
Nor earthly music that, nor borrowed vaunt

Of heavenly spheres supreme, an echo strange  
Of the unreal world that dreams and shadows haunt.  
Yet as 'mid elfin notes with sudden change

Rings out the hunter's horn, so these among  
Was other music heard of measured range,  
As of the ever-moving orbs, a song

Sung with the harpers of th' Elysian grove ;  
An undertone scarce marked, scarce felt, yet  
strong

Drawn to the centre of abysmal Love.

## CANTO VIII

We enter a mountain-girdled plain, covered with flowers unknown on earth—These are the illusions of Philosophy—In a central temple she is seen as a mighty female figure : her votaries stream forth and circle endlessly round—Here are Socrates, Solomon, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Epicurus, and others—The goddess specially favours Lucretius—Presently the whole fades in mist.

ROUSED by that music's twofold chord, my eyes  
From the dark path I lifted, wonders new  
Beholding, and fresh realms 'neath other skies.  
Passed were the forest bounds, and dazzling blue  
Over us rose the sky, but circling far  
Wall-like a mountain line enclosed the view.  
So round the plain that most Sarmatian <sup>1</sup> war  
Has wronged and yet may wrong, the Balkan heights  
Rear a black rampart to the midnight star.  
But here the guarded plain with spring's delights  
Glowed, as of Persian looms the web, or burn  
With many coloured fires the Northern nights.  
But nor in herb nor flower could I discern  
Aught of our custom'd earth's ; nor glowing rose  
Nor lily wan, nor moss, nor downy fern.  
For as through flickering veil mis-shaped when glows

<sup>1</sup> Russian invasions.



O'er Tadmor's sands the day, strange forms of men  
Or beasts, or crested towers, or palmy rows  
Now fixed, now gliding, daze the traveller's ken ;

So was the portent rare, to things of earth  
Like yet unlike, mocking the where and when.  
"O guardian sole and guide, lord of my birth,"

Such was my cry, "what mockery this? for whom  
Prepared, or real the scene, or jesting mirth?"  
Then he, "No jestful semblance this; the doom,

Matched with its earthly foil, whate'er the task  
Done or undone, apportions light or gloom.  
This the true substance, that the semblant mask,

But each to each reflex; the harvest grain  
The garner fills, the vintaged grape the cask.  
So they whose numbered days in labour vain

Have risen and set, though high th' intent, by fate  
Hither dismissed, concordant meed obtain.

They who in fond research, and vain debate

Of cause, effect, and end, philosophy  
Named, but illusion all, early and late  
Have toiled nor aught attained, by fantasy

Beguiled of noblest aim, as who should take  
For substance real the sunset pageantry.  
But these as sad Arachne's daughters make

Of their own selves a centred maze, a frame  
Of wisdom void, though wrought for wisdom's sake."  
Thus while he spoke as pours on festal days

From some cathedral porch the city crowd,  
One, but parted soon by several ways,  
So from a columned porch of aspect proud

Reared in 'mid field, a sober-vested throng  
Streamed, as o'er Autumn skies a rising cloud.  
And some with upturned face their ranks among

In joyful memory went, and some with mien  
Downcast, as victims bowed to tyrant wrong;  
And some with measured tread and brow serene

In banded sequence moved ; and some pursued  
Singly their way, th' ungreeted crowd between.

But all, whate'er their guise of seeming mood,

By circling tracks were led, the trodden ground  
Retreading still, with endless toil renewed.

Saddened I gazed, nor for my gazing found

Purpose or rest, as in mid stream the eye  
Wearies to watch the eddy's ceaseless round.

Till, for a while unseen, a temple high

Midmost the plain I marked ; a Doric row  
Of columned marble 'gainst the purple sky.

Almost a blank it seemed, the secular snow

That crowns Helvetia's peaks, of mark or stain  
Does not more void, more spectral-phantom, show.  
There from the crowd withdrawn, as whom disdain

Part, and in part deep thought, or weariness  
Yet unresolved from things around detain,

A mighty form I saw ; a woman's dress

Enwrapped the giant limbs ; her laurelled brow  
Leaned on her upturned hand its heavy stress.

Now her veiled eyes on earth she fixed, and now

Raised to the temple vault, where open space  
Might to Heaven's utmost heights free pass allow.  
And as white sails a fitful radiance trace

To shepherd eyes, where from far ocean flashed  
They watch the gleam, so changeful shone her face ;  
Triumphant now, now with sad front abashed

She viewed the circling crowd, where oft in strife  
Imaged or real, the currents crossed or clashed,  
Bearing opposed and thwart the flags of life

Sombre or gay, as with the mystic lore  
Of Asia scrolled or Attic wisdom rife.

There whom the Delphian voice in days of yore

Wisest of men proclaimed, and Salem's vaunt,  
Th' uxorious king, in wealth and knowledge more ;

† And whom Athéné's shrine and wisdom's haunt

Of dense assembly named, a teacher knew  
Nor flattering guile could win, nor treachery daunt.†  
And next, divinest of the godlike few

Worthy that path to tread, the garden lord  
Of Academe, nursed on Hymettian dew.  
To him the golden key, the magic word

That through all spheres to the spirit's utmost goal  
Pierces, was given, the lustral pain's reward.  
Thine the hid fount, O Plato! thine the bowl

Reversing Circe's draughts: released by thee,  
Nor passion's charm can bind, nor death control.  
Thou too, the master mind,<sup>1</sup> eternity

Thy name in wisdom's page, wast there, a star  
Mirrored on endless waves of Time's wide sea.  
Nor through th' unshaken heavens while day's bright  
car

Measures its Zodiac course, shall earth again  
Relume the lamps in buried Greece that are.  
And other lights were there, nor all in vain,

Though pale, their splendour shone, to distant years  
Beacons or wildfires of a starless main.  
The Samian<sup>2</sup> first, by old Crotona's peers

Revered a present god, such notes divine  
His music touched to right attuned ears,  
To grosser sense denied; a fruitful vine

O'erbranching half a world; his word a gate  
Through the spoiled tomb to life's all-gathering shrine.  
Nor absent hence the peerless twain of date

Coeval though opposed; twin monarchs they  
Over one realm in lordship separate.

He<sup>3</sup> who to pleasure gave the transient day

Portioned to dying men, and he<sup>4</sup> who led  
Through toil endured and pleasure spurned the way,  
And who<sup>5</sup> to Fate's constraint and order bred

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle.

<sup>2</sup> Pythagoras.

<sup>3</sup> Epicurus.

<sup>4</sup> Apparently Diogenes.

<sup>5</sup> Zeno of Citium.

Of changeless law the ever-changing show  
Of earth assigns, a headship without head ;  
And who in heaven above or earth below

Nor headship own nor head, and purposed frame  
To hap confused and sightless strife forgo.

Blind and of blind the guides, a hollow name

Pillared on seeming lore, and groundward bent  
On partial shapes, let go the common aim.

From these averse her view she turns, intent

On the maze-tangled clue 'mid weed and stone  
Now seen, now hid, through the far labyrinth sent,  
† From gate to central shrine to those alone

Favoured by her, through all the spheres who led  
Her bard, the bard of love, that secret known : †  
For hers the purer ray, the firmer tread,

Where lags the reasoning mind, and faint and chill  
Glimmers the light by other cressets shed :

The substance real of unreal things, that still

By earth on earthly lives are clad, the truth  
By visible form belied, th' eternal Will,  
Being and form and life in lasting sooth ;

Trinal the name, the essence one ; the goal  
Eternal life stayed in eternal youth.

As in clear letters writ some storied scroll

To him who reads unfolds its lore, to me  
From part to part lay bare the animate Whole,  
And 'mid those moving forms whose pageantry

Figured the questioning mind, the prize attained  
By some, by others missed, was given to see.

Then while I looked, as clouds with sunset stained

Crimson and gold, at night's approaching gloom  
Of light and joy despoil themselves,—so seemed  
Each noblest form and best,—Athens and Rome

With the elder East and late illumined West,  
Showed as faint outlines on a sculptured tomb.  
While from far depths with gathering sound increased

Was heard the twofold strain, the undertone,  
As 'mid high choral chaunts the murmuring priest.  
And at the sound the visioned forms each one

With her their worshipped Queen, and dome and  
plain,

In a bright mist were wrapped around and gone.  
Nor of the world-long dream might aught remain

Or verse, or history's page, or system wove  
Through subtlest web, though fair, nor shadow stain  
The colourless radiance of infolding Love.

## CANTO IX

A new, brilliant, and gay landscape appears : a myrtle-crowned procession approaches—These are writers of Romance, from the *Hundred Tales* of Tuscany to Scott, the giant among all novelists—Eastern tale-writers, Japanese and others, by whom Europe has profited—Praise of the art of Romance as a solace to man—The procession returns, a vast multitude, till all are merged and disappear in music.

'MID the green shelter of calm summer dells

Touched by the morning rays, the twittering song  
Of countless loves in glad contentment tells.

Nor less the crystal runs and pools among

Of Hermon's snow-fed streams, quick glances sent  
Of scale and fin reveal a happy throng.

Each in its proper world, the element

To bird or fish decreed, accordant days  
With its own bounds, its birthright, lives content.

Not so with foolish men, by self-taught ways

From nature's track divergent far, with toil  
Purposeless, self-imposed, our pathway strays.

For glad contentment grief, for calm, turmoil,

Such harvest reaped is ours ; the loftier aim  
Too lofty planned, is but attainment's foil.

A note too highly pitched, O holiest name

\*Professed\* by mortal tongues, Philosophy,

Thine be all praise ; to us alone the blame.

We, while all else in earth, in sea, or sky,

Obey their being's law, with vain endeavour

Thy manifest law transgress, thy voice defy.

Thus while I thought, he whose true guidance ever

Led me from truth to truth, whom from my side

Nor measured space nor spirit-depths could sever,

Towards me turned and smiled, as smiles the guide

When some precipitous peak with toil ascended

Opens o'er lands unknown a prospect wide ;—

O smile all smiles above, by thee befriended

From height to height I climb, till the long way

In thee begun in thee be summed and ended !

Scattered the mist and gone ; once more the day

On grass and wild-flowers beamed, nor aught was there

Of columned portal seen or grave array.

Nor other sound but the cool rustling air

That freshly blew was heard, by mystic chaunt

Unvexed, and free as children's voices are.

Then as on glittering rains the coloured vaunt

Of glad Thaumantia's bow, or chequered dyes

When in 'mid air processioned banners flaunt,

So the whole radiance of those sunlit skies

With shifting hues was stained ; less gay the breast

Of that rare bird, last pledge of Paradise.

And as at morn by light and victory blest

The glad procession moves, memorial show

Of the risen God in manhood's form expressed,

So from the circling distance, row by row,

With myrtle crowned and bays, to music \*meet\*

Came a great crowd, nor swift their march nor slow.

Till in half circle near us drawn, their feet

Halted from onward course, and ranged around

Stood the bright throng in ordered state complete.

And the glad music rang with blended sound

Of joyful greetings given, as welcome made

When grate returning keels on native ground.

The while o'erhead in the pure air displayed

Those painted banners streamed, with emblems rare

Blazoned, and letters twined in curious braid.

"Those whom thou seest," thus to my questioning  
prayer

Answered my spirit's guide, "and whom thy eye  
Seest not, in distance veiled and luminous air ;

As flowers to fields, as sunlight to the sky,

Beauty and splendour give, so these to earth

Freshness and joy from age to age supply.

Foremost and best who now with answering mirth

Cheer the dull hours, and now with gentle tears

Slake to new life the dusty wayside dearth.

By these time's orbs reversed, return the years

Charactered large in fame ; by these the dream

Of fancy wove in waking fact appears."

Nurse of romance, by Arno's storied stream

Late-born of race divine, thy first essay

To hundred tales attuned Love's single theme ;

Till where the North's cold star with steady ray

Mirrors on the dark stream, whose bordered wave

Sunders the kindred realms of partnered sway,

Ettrick's dark glades and heathery slopes among

Was reared thy stateliest shrine ; whence rising shone

Brightest and best on earth the visioned throng :

A giant shade o'er lesser forms alone

Towering in perfect might, so 'mid the rest

Monarch supreme, thy presence, Scott, was known.

Yet not unhonoured they nor few, the crest

Of the bright wave of thought, with quickening flow

Moved from the garrulous East to manlier West.

Here 'mid flower-blazoned flags in order go

Thy cinctured sons, Japan ; nor honoured less

O'er half a world, the Seric dragons glow.

Here forms uncouth and garish hues express



What dreaming India saw ; a strength and grace  
Present, but masked in fancy's motley dress.

And where with mornless nights unequal days

Earth's narrower circle to her warrior brood

Alternate metes, walled in by icy space,

Even there of glorious deeds and hardihood

In strange adventure known, and love's delight,

Is the wild tale by fancy's art renewed.

And as on distant slopes the mirrored light

Casts a pale gleam, so Europe's withered age

From these some radiance draws in time's despite.

For not alone by verse divine the page

A healing gives to men, nor history's roll

Can the great thirst, the concrete want, assuage

Where yearns the imperfect to the perfect whole.

Yet these some solace bring, nor idly shed

By these are the bright drops from fancy's bowl.

Then as of nearing crowds confused the tread

Shook, where we stood, the ground, and once again

Music and song the approaching pageant led.

While from its further verge the teeming plain,

Now vaster grown and domed with purer blue,

Pennon and flag sent forth in mingled train.

Nor now of question made or answer new

Was need these bands to tell ; the garb they bore

Their native land and age refigured true.

And first whom venturous heart, and mind of lore

Insatiate, by wide lands and lonely seas

The world's remotest chambers drove t' explore,

Nor scared by danger's scowl, nor witched by ease,

Followers of him, the wise, who unbeguiled

By Sirens' songs or beauty's witcheries

'Mid perilous seas and mountain waves up-piled

Held on his way's intent, till through the haze

Of twenty years dim loomed Thiaki's isle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ithaca.

O comrades mine and brothers true, by ways

Various to goals as various bound, to death

Untimely some, some to long years of praise ;

Nor history's stately roll nor poet's wreath

Your special crown outvies, whose just [award]

Makes straight th' unequal praise of earth, beneath,

'Mid the glad tenants of th' Elysian sward

Here, till fulfilled the lustral hour ; to each

Portioned in restful life the fit reward.

All who high hopes by quickening deed or speech

On the dull earth as rays have cast, and brought

Hesperian fruit from the death-guarded beach ;

Who to the world of sense, the world of thought,

Have given a wider realm, a dearer gain

Than Genoa's son for Spain's dull tyrant sought.

—Here stays perforce my song, for now the plain

With forms of light and beauty numberless

Was filled, as filled with waves the ocean main.

As when through terraced streets the people press

On to the central city square, where waits

A nation's saviour from her worst distress,

The Conqueror King, who from his country's gates

Repelled the intruding foe, and for despair

Wrested late triumph from th' unequal Fates :

On the great throne with trophies decked, and fair

With grateful wreaths, serene he sits, and sees

His own just pride in all reflected there.

Then as at noon's dead calm a gusty breeze

Sudden upwhirls the summer's dust, and wakes

To rustling sound and life the leafy trees ;

So from all sides, as one, tumultuous breaks

A nation's just acclaim, a mighty cry

That of all praise one joy, one utterance, makes,

Till from its ordered place upbursting high

The full-blown music swells ; the pomp and pride

Fused and transformed to living harmony ;

So now the bannered crowd, the shrine, the throne  
With her the spirit-queen, the pomp, the flowers,  
Lost to all else, in music lived alone.  
While from far depths as Zephyr's diamond showers  
Descend in latter Spring, such music fell  
As twines of Iris' rays th' Elysian bowers ;  
Or subtler yet than old Amphion's spell  
When Thebes embodied song ; fit dwelling wove  
For those, who prisoned in earth's twilight cell,  
Brightened its gloom with beams of mirrored Love.

## CANTO X

Sadder regions now await us—We are on the sea-shore : a mysterious darkness arises over the landscape, mixed with lurid flashes—My guide explains that the five realms thus far passed belong to those whom Love will make perfect—Now follows the Sixth: that of those misled by Science ; their doom is to dwell in a world such as they planned—A momentary gleam ; a mystic conflict ; we pass over the black gulf.

NOT without pain the things of pain in words

We image forth, and sadness told in verse

Sadness to him who sings and hears affords.

But sadder yet when, as a funeral hearse

Following a bridal show, the songster's lay

To gladness tuned, must pain and death rehearse.

Such now my task assigned ; nor light th' essay

Though by his aid upheld whose guiding hand

Led through all lustral realms my fateful way.

And thou, crowned leader of the conquering band,

Father of light and life, thy radiance shed

On the thick darkness of th' ill-destined land.

In the far distance now behind us spread

The mountain barrier lay ; the sea beside

Left but a shingly path to forward tread :

That sea by storm unvexed, unswollen by tide,

Whose depths with earthly date coeval here

The sevenfold realm, goal of earth's paths, divide.  
Calm as the smile of sleeping child, and clear

As the child's wakening eye, the watery blue  
Mirrored the azure-vaulted hemisphere.  
Not the far isles of silver named, if true

The famed Milesian tale, more peaceful gleamed  
When steered o'er Euxine depths the suppliant crew :  
Nor e'er before in my sad heart I deemed

Such peace abode had found, that all endured  
Of pain or toil, outfaded memories seemed.  
Then as to near eclipse when most assured

Darkens the noontide day, so land and main  
Grew dark to sight, by a strange gloom obscured.  
Yet whence it came I knew not ; cloud nor stain

Nor sign of tempest there, but as betrayed  
To spell malign, dethroned the noontide's reign.  
Toward my guide I turned, of speech afraid,

So heavy weighed the gloom ; and thrice my lips  
Failed of their utterance, thrice the task assayed.  
Till thus ; "What ominous shade, what sun's eclipse

Mars the fair prospect round, what demon power  
In grasp malign the dying beauty clips ?"

"Fear not," the Master's answer came, "the hour  
Is short, though given to ill, but long shall last  
The sequent good, and earth's atoning dower."

So through the thickening gloom we onward passed,

Nor from his hand my hand I loosed, till ended  
Sheer on the beach our narrowing path at last.  
But o'er the opposing wave in air extended

Something, I knew not what, so dense the gloom,  
As from above let down to earth descended.  
As the vast portal of some Memphian tomb,

But vaster, this ; or as old legends tell,  
The giant arch that spans the gulf of doom.  
But on my ear through the far darkness fell

Such sound with measured throb, as when the blast

Tolls on the beacon lone the warning bell.  
And as 'mid Adria's storms the bending mast,  
    Tipped with no friendly light the sails between  
Glimmers, a sign of bale to eyes aghast,<sup>1</sup>  
Such phosphor glare now far now nearer seen  
    Flashed through the curtained gloom, a messenger  
Of unknown dread from 'yond the further screen.  
And at that spectre flash meseemed the air  
    Pulsed to its beat, as when the large-winged bird  
Of night with circling swoop regains her lair.  
And but through the thick shade at times I heard,—  
    For sight was none,—the master's voice, the tone  
That to fresh life my frozen pulses stirred,  
Sure had I perished there, to senseless stone  
    By Gorgon fear congealed.

Here my guide bids me rest till a sign to advance is  
    given.

“Now hear ; by Fate's decree to thee revealed  
    Have the five realms their secret worth, whate'er  
Life's proper aims to man's fulfilment yield.  
In deeds of noblest name and public care  
    Was theirs on earth the choice ; expectant now,  
Till perfect found, in the first realm they share.  
Next who th' all perfect from the starry brow  
    Of absolute beauty showed, in art to bide  
Heirloom of earth, the second realm avow.  
Then the great powers<sup>2</sup> to whom all else beside  
    Even as to gods bows down, of all that is  
Blessing or curse, o'er the 'mid realm preside.  
Last the high boon by favouring destinies  
    Given to the lords of thought or song, displays  
Reflex and earnest of accomplished bliss.  
Of all perfecting Love the upward ways

<sup>1</sup> S. Elmo's fire.

<sup>2</sup> Love and Religion.

“Thus far hast thou beheld ; all these by hope  
Cleansed from the dust and stain of mortal days.  
But other realms than these and other scope

Await thee now, where o'er dark seas outspread  
In limitless seeming hangs the murky cope.  
Here whom vain skill and vauntful science led

From life's true paths astray, and Nature's scroll  
In earth's fair semblance writ have backwards read ;  
Who spirit in laws of sense would bind, and soul

In mindless force resume, and on the parts  
Intent, neglect life's proper gift, the whole.  
Dull eyes that beauty's rays admit not, hearts

Kin to the beasts that fade ; a reason bound  
In narrowest range that mind from sense disparts.  
The life-fraught breeze of star-lit dawn, the sound

Of summer woods at noon, the painted scene  
In myriad hues the sunset gold around,  
The upward gaze of flowers, the innumerable green

Of the moist fields, the busy insect swarm  
Of motley life the sheltering blades between ;  
The Winter's timely sleep, the breezes warm

Of Spring's return, the golden Autumn leaf,  
The changeful sky, the wind-driven cloud, the storm,—  
Rest to man's toil assigned, to woes relief,

As on the mother's breast the cradled child  
Tended by Nature's joys and Nature's grief,  
Founts of pure life in freshness undefiled ;

—From these aside they turn, to barren waste  
From their own birthright-pasture self-exiled.  
A fevered youth's unrest, an age debased

To narrowest aims, till lustral periods spent  
In what they loved have the marred lines retraced.  
Till then to their ill choice the element

Conforms th' abode assigned, for Nature's range  
Outgone, in their own work constrained and pent.  
Ill hap the work, the workman ill, th' exchange

"That from the beauteous life, the light, the pleasure,  
Heirlooms of men, would men and earth estrange."

Then I; "Master and lord, if granted leisure

Be to discourse awhile, with ampler key  
Unlock, I pray, of this hid lore the treasure.

If ranked with things that are or things to be

What thou declaredst e'en now,—the mind perverse,  
The ignoble task, the ruined world in fee,—

So, to the sunlit earth returned, my verse

May timely warning give, lest seeds of ill  
Unwitting sown, for harvest bear a curse."

Thus while I spoke, a sudden wind and chill

From the far distance came, the woods among

As heard the screech-owl's cry in midnight still.

And as a star 'mid cloudy vapours hung

Distant and faint, or the brief-flashing ray  
O'er Cambrian straits from Treser's watch-tower<sup>1</sup> flung,  
So swift so slight the gleam that midmost way

O'er the drear gulf upborne, on quivering air  
Fluttered awhile, then passed in gloom away.

Yet ere it wholly passed an upward stair

Reared on that dead sea-beach to heights denied  
To upward gaze was given in presence there.

While as at fear's approach his father's side

Close seeks the shrinking child, in vague alarm  
Nearer to him I drew, my guard, my guide.

But he not unforewarned with prescient care

Circled my waist, the while on mine his hand  
With gentle pressure laid assured from harm.

Thus while we stood, as o'er the dusty land

Sweeps the wild Pampas storm, from high de-  
scended

A rushing night, swifter than lightning's brand;

Then all was lost to sense, confused and blended

Darkness and storm and flight, nor mine to tell

<sup>1</sup> Apparently Holyhead: *Treser* meaning the House of the Star.



What rage assailed, what escort wings defended.  
Till the black gulf o'erpast what next befell  
    Be in this Pageant shown, so far approve  
They at whose hest I write, the gracious spell  
    Woven of all life that beauty crowns with Love.

## CANTO XI

A dismal landscape like the English "Black Country" is seen, filled with engines and works—the triumph of Applied Science and Machinery—Here are colossal bridges, crystal palaces,—all, vanity and vexation of spirit, contrasted with the charm of pure unspoiled Nature—The future of the indwellers revealed.

The MS. begins with a picture of Naples, but is incomplete.

How the great gulf we passed, how reached the hill

Circling the realm of shade, is to the mind

That would recall, a doubt and mystery still.

As on lone mountain heights a vehement wind

With darkest night conjoined, of when and where

Cancels the sense, till all, before, behind,

Is undistinguished blank ; the travellers fare

Onward, yet know not how, till sudden rise

Some welcome landmark through th' unfolding air ;

Such was our way that to enquiring eyes

Little revealed but gloom, though conscious sense

Told of swift change in half-seen phantasies.

High in 'mid space we seemed by strange suspense

Borne on o'erarching span, with iron clank

And mandrake shrieks, and sulphurous vapours dense.

And onward whirled we passed from bank to bank

Of the great chasm, where flitting bale-fires far

In fathomless depths of darkness rose and sank.  
Till as o'er pest-stricken shores an evil star

Motionless hangs, a ruddy light, that seemed  
Purposeful placed, signed passage from afar.

Till where o'erhead the smoky lustre gleamed

On a black soil and bare our further way  
Was stayed, nor ill the end such course beseemed.  
Like the fair land in England's happier day

Once fair with grassy dell and streams, but now  
Of blackness named, such scene around us lay.

While frequent ranged,<sup>1</sup> in far receding row

Were ranged<sup>1</sup> the dens of toil, the labour vain  
That ever sought to find yet knew not how.

A land where rest is not nor pause, a gain

Still sought, eluding still, a shifting goal  
Of the vexed heart, tired limbs, and failing brain.

Where to mere means the end, to parts the whole

Postponed, is lost to view ; where reigns supreme  
Mechanic law, throned on the void of soul.

Where for the glorious sun, the connate beam,

Man's heirloom health and strength, a deadly pall  
Daylight and starlight shrouds in sulphurous steam :

Where the fair forms of life, the flowerets small,

The mighty trees, the hedgerow's berried store,

The bushy glens where pleasant waters fall,

The grazing herds, the feathered joys that soar

In air or perch the boughs, the life content

As nature gives to life, nor frets for more,—

All these for graceless forms of toil, intent

On gain and gainful change and toilsome haste,  
Bartered are found through this sad realm's extent.

And every joysome sound by moorland waste

Or in deep thicket heard, or pastures green,

—Mirth answering mirth, and sport with sport enlaced

†Of bird or beast or man,—for sound obscene

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* MSS. :—a sign of unrevised work.

Of dull metallic roar, or discord shrill  
Of wild ear-piercing shriek is heard between.†  
And for each scent that evening flowers distill

From perfume-laden cups, the heavy air  
Was thick with sulphurous reek and airs that kill.  
And for the honeyed flow and savours rare

Of nature's ready feast, a poisoned sense  
The palate filled, and craving thirst's despair.  
And the soft touch of natural influence

In breeze or sunny beam or contact warm  
Of life with living life, all these from hence  
Were driven, as rose-leaves by November's storm ;

And in their place collision harsh and rude,  
And gestures rough that living grace deform.  
Such was the nearer scene ; but distant viewed

Vast piles of gathered wealth, and things that told  
Of busy crowds around th' horizon stood ;  
Bridges of monstrous span, and iron mould,

In outstretched meanness, huge monotonies,  
Their sullen length from bank to bank unrolled :  
And serried chimneys tall, that the pure skies

Sully with vaporous breath, and at their feet  
The sleepless glare of clanging factories.  
Nor wanted high-built tower nor dome complete

In palace-semblance reared ; but all, alas,  
Were but a figured show, a hollow cheat.  
Of painted metals vile and common glass

From base to glittering crown, an empty thing ;  
"The earth has bubbles, as the water has,"

Then spoke my guide ; "What prize what failure bring

Science with skill combined, the golden age  
Of Man o'er Nature, Master, Lord and King,  
Prefigured here thou seest ; when the blind rage

Of progress, change, and wealth, the threefold gin,  
Shuts on the self-trapped life its iron cage.  
For mind, mechanic skill, for rest, the din

"Of movement without end, for wise content  
Glamour without, and craving void within."

Thus while he spoke, as who the purport meant

On symbol rock engraven, or painted scene  
On crumbling wall, relates ; his gaze intent  
With narrowed eyes resumes, if aught unseen

By a first view may yet remain, in quest  
Of the veiled Isis hid the folds between ;  
So with new sense of wonderment possessed

Again around I gazed, till darker grew  
The heavens, and murkier burned the fires unblest.  
Then as on blood fresh-shed a deadlier hue

Falls from a passing shade, within my breast  
Darkened on my first dread a horror new.

I ask what race will be thus cursed, and if no deliverance  
will ever be—My guide promises final victory.

"But first through dateless hours of wintry night

Must the sad ages roll, till other stars  
New influence shed from unimagined light,  
Throes of a second birth, inglorious wars

With treason foul confused, and new disease  
With famine joined, and all that slays or mars,—  
Such harvest science brings ; by such degrees

Fulfilled the promise old, that life transmutes  
In the foul dream of Circe's witcheries.

O Eden earth to Hinnom, men to brutes

Changed by illusive spell, O bitter tree  
Of knowledge, flowers ill-plucked, ill-tasted fruits,  
Who shall thy venom purge, the captive free

From the dark spell, replume the silver dove  
By thee despoiled and tarnished ? who but he  
The one, th' all-healing, all-restoring Love ?"

## CANTO XII

Figures appear huddled together—I question them : the chief answers that he and his comrades desired to frame a world where Man should reign supreme and free from higher interference, reducing everything to the Visible—Another now speaks : his aim was to supersede mind-work by machine-work—These are the Patriarchs of Steam and Rail—For this revolt against Nature the shades are condemned to restlessness of despair and hope—A third follows : he broke by the Electric Telegraph the bonds wisely set between nations—Then appears a vision of natural beauty in contrast.

WITH sights and sounds of cureless ill, that weighed  
Leadlike on sense and heart, the dreary scene  
Of earth by man misused my eye surveyed.  
As the mean foulness of a suburb green  
With burnt-out fire-works strewed, in trampled mire  
Shows where the drunken night has noisiest been ;  
So grimed with crusted smoke, defaced by fire  
The beauty forged by man ; earth, water, air,  
Polluted all, dishonoured nature's pyre.  
Wide was the range, and long I gazed, but there  
No form withal discerned, nor beast nor bird  
Nor human shade moved on the level bare.  
Then, as on far-off slopes an antlered herd  
Sudden appears, where long the huntsman's ken

Nought but grey rock and grassy tuft averred ;  
So 'mid the desolate stillness of a glen  
Somewhat apart that lay, a gathered band  
Were pent as huddled sheep in stony pen.  
With downcast faces sad, nor foot nor hand  
They moved, but each from each in thought apart  
Pored on the blackness of the circling sand.  
So by Cathedral gates or opening mart  
Sit crippled forms and old, in memory dim  
Retracing days that in glad life had past.  
I saw, then wondering turned from these to him,  
Light of my thoughts and ways, to ask and learn  
What the presentment of that conclave grim.  
But he, "From their own selves may question earn  
The answer rightly sought, so with fresh gain  
Of truth to th' upper world may'st thou return."  
Thus having said across the blighted plain  
The path he led to where, silent and grey,  
In twilight semblance cowered those shadows vain :  
Till near approach with greeting joined ; but they  
Approach nor greeting marked, as who th' intent  
Saw not, or seeing cared not to repay.  
Then with slow pause his forehead downward bent  
Upreared who seemed the chief, and on my face  
Fixed a dull stare of doubtful discontent.  
And thus ; "Thy profitless steps to this, the place  
Of baffled hopes, what adverse power has brought,  
Unwelcome witness of my life's disgrace ?  
Mine and who with me bide ; for ours the thought  
On man's own visible world ; from none beside,  
Spirit or god, or aid or hindrance sought  
An order new to uprear, a crowning pride  
Of science wed to skill, a world where man  
Sole lord, with none should earth's empire divide.  
O Titan-scheme forbid, heaven-blasted plan  
Of Sennaar's legend-tower, on wings to flight

“ Unequal, whelmed in gulfs Icarian !

Chiefest of these was I in Nature's spite

Distance and space to foil, and things apart

Wisely ordained, in rashness to unite ;

Till all the daedal earth by Nature's art

Distinct, its various grace and life forgo,

Blent and confounded in one common mart.

Effaced the primal bounds, nor ocean's flow

Nor track of stoniest drought, might land from land

Longer divide, nor crest of pathless snow :

Till the rash boast of old Chaldeans' band

Should late fulfilment find, nor speech nor place,  
Aught on Man's earth, exempt from man's command.

As of past rule each mark or sculptured trace

New lords with care remove, so save his own

Should man all right deny, all rule efface ;

Nought but the visible left, nor shrine nor throne,

But mind's ; an eyeless heaven, a rayless sun ;—

O Nimrod tower, by nature's curse o'erthrown ! ”

He ceased, in sullen musings lost ; but one

Beside him found in place, with sequent tale

Took up the theme by th' elder shade begun.

And said ; “ Whoe'er thou art, to the sad vale

Of man's decay self-wrought who mortal ear

Hast brought, if listening, chance may those avail

Whom earth's glad day-light cheers ; attend and hear

What heard thou needs must write, the wretchedness

Of the great vaunt, fulfilled in ruin drear.

The god-apportioned toil, the daily stress

Of thought with labour joined, the apt consent

Of man with nature's partnered loveliness,

These I contemned, as childhood's slight content

Misprized in serious age ; on wider gains

And vaster plans, so willed my greed, intent.

Machines not men my aim, 'twas mine t' attain

By mere mechanic force and sleight whate'er



"Had purpose given to living hand or brain :  
Till as at wintry breath the garland fair

From the bald woodland drops, and loveliest shapes  
Shrink to dead heaps, nor strength nor beauty there ;  
So art to mere devisement, men to apes,

Kingdoms to headless hordes, strength to decay  
Shrunk, of a blighted vine the shrivelled grapes.  
Rotten ere ripe the vintage ; wretched they

That tainted wine who drink, and thirsting turn  
From the pure draughts of nature's founts away.  
Here their presentment true ; look round and learn

Timely what they too late, to nature's law  
Till scourged by pain our upward state return."  
Thus while he spoke the circling shades I saw

In restless motion swayed, as when the wind  
Bends the long grasses of the whitening shaw.  
And some with looks that horror told behind

Turned a reverted gaze, and forward some  
Leant as in hope a promised goal to find.  
But more, as of all thought or feeling numb,

Mere shadows went or came ; while rose and fell  
As of vain gusts at eve the ceaseless hum.  
Nor word distinct nor uttered speech to tell

Whence their complaint or why, but vague unrest  
As the first loosening of a Circe spell.

But I with saddened thought and labouring breast

Beheld the ruin wrought, and mourned to see  
How ill completion matched the will's behest ;  
And how from Nature's bounds by science free

Self-prisoned man remains, and less than man,  
A withered dwarf, who more than god would be.  
Till with faint voice scarce heard and aspect wan,

One who even thus of past pre-eminence  
Some token gave, thus to my ear began.

"'Twixt land and land of space the sundering fence  
Had wisest Nature reared, lest folly's taint

“Contagious grown should blot the birthright sense :  
So the bright hues that Life’s fair garden paint

With beauty’s various flowers should safe remain  
From spreading rust, and stain of mildew faint.  
More even than those thou heard’st, the mighty twain

Patriarchs of steam and rail, did I the bound  
Connatural set to earth-born man disdain.

Mine was the art that could in one confound

All diverse speech, all thought ; the girdle mine,  
The fatal chain, linked the wide world around.

As in besieging war from mine to mine

Is knit the slumbering death, that waked, confounds  
In ruinous heaps the long defended line,

A moment past well ranged they stood, the bounds

To hostile force and envious onslaught set ;

Now a mere mass confused in fenceless mounds.

So my far-reaching art, the coronet

Of science named, o’er earth’s innumerable bloom

Of flower and fruit was cast, a tangling net,

Cast o’er a captive world ; to equal doom

Wisdom with folly bound, till folly’s voice

For truthful speech nor hearing left nor room.

But ye, dark powers of ill perverse, whose choice

Is with destruction made, who man with man

Through me in (self-wrought) ruin linked, rejoice.”

Then at that uttered curse those spectres wan

That mistlike filled the vale, as tremulous heat

On noontide sands, their flickering dance began.

Till as an updriven wave with swift retreat

Draws speckled foam and sand, while towering high

From shore and sea the closing waters meet,

A weltering crest upchurned, where dazed the eye

As by the crash the ear, in fierce contest

Upheaved, self-tortured everlastingly :—

So from the gloom that veiled the spectral West

Outburst a whirlwind blast, that wildly driven

Chased all confused those phantom forms unblest,  
Scattered and shred-like torn ; and lo ! the heaven  
    In sapphire dome unstained, and the pure air  
With earth to earth-born man for birthright given.  
Where now th' unnatured crowd ? the tumult where  
    Of force from rest disjoined ? around, above,  
Is the great calm, unvexed by toilful care,  
    Best dower of renovate life to renovate Love.

## CANTO XIII

I see a city of civilization, science, skill, wealth, ruled by the democratic assembly which disdains the past, and is ruled by no principle—Seated in chill light, in a robe figuring the descent of man from brutes, is Science, a changeful figure, throned as alone supreme and divine—A band of her followers is around ; like Science, all bearing a withered bough—a branch of the tree of knowledge—Their grovelling nature-studies described.

CITY of man, not God, by wealth and skill  
Earth-born, earth-gathered, built,—thy golden walls  
Shone on my vision from the frontier hill.  
Far glittering roofs, wide domes, and windowed halls  
In labyrinth lines entwined, and factories  
Piled with rich wares, and guarded arsenals,  
And marts of ornate skill to longing eyes  
Set forth in broad arcades, and all of wealth,  
Science, and keen device, the purposed prize,  
And all that chemic lore or craft to health  
Can lend in boasted aid ; and all that sense  
Desires in feast avowed or solaced stealth.  
Nor aught of peacock show or gay pretence  
Or specious gilded dross, or costly bait  
To sensuous joy ordained, was wanting thence.  
There too through many a pillared porch elate

In glittering ranges curved the illumined stage  
Showed the bright lurements of theatric state.

And she, the late-born child of feverish age,

Th' orchestra, queen of sound, in gauzy chains  
By science led, of music turned the page.

Nor far removed the echoing hall where reigns

Supreme the popular voice, a wordy throng  
Gathered, whom more to note this verse disdains :—

They who the names of sacred power that long,

Watchwords of hero deeds, earth's nobler days  
Led to high praise, besmirch with party wrong.

For here of ancient laws and form-fenced ways

Traced by ancestral care, the service true  
Of old obedience, and tradition's haze

Fringing with rainbow hues the distant view

Till as from bud the flower, from flower the fruit,

Continuous blends the old with order new,

Nor part had here nor place ; upturned the root,

Withered the stem, the flower ; and in their place

The popular rule, the many-headed brute.

Of shrine or temple nought, of artist grace

Wed to the nobler thought, of reverence paid  
To birth or age nor memory here nor trace.

As fish in ocean's depths, or beasts in glade,

Or birds in limitless air, nor guide nor chief

Who own, a headless horde ;—by sun or shade

As sand by winds upheaved ;—or autumn leaf

Self-sundered from the sap-giving stem, or aught  
Than these more unrestrained, more vain, more brief.

City of men, thy children such ! so wrought,

A ship of fools, thy state, with idle winds

Distend thy sails, thy hold with ruin fraught.

Then as a tempest-flash well nigh that blinds

The unexpectant eye, when prone the rain  
Descends, and cower 'mid huddled flocks the hinds,  
So from th' horizon of that blasted plain

Even to the central domes that prouder rose  
Than Thebes or Ilion to th' Orphéan strain,  
A mirrored radiance shone ; its source who knows

Let him reveal, I may not ; but the glare  
As with an iceberg's chill my senses froze.  
Shuddering I gazed and wondered much, for there

Midmost that joyless night a woman's shape,  
But queenly proud, as pampered harlots are,  
Enthroned I saw ; o'er her large form a cape

Broidered with strange device was thrown, whereon  
Were imaged worm and fish and bird and ape ;  
Each interwoven and blent with each, that none

Could last from first divide ; a pedigree,  
Though old, unhonoured ; though divergent, one.  
Such was the robe, the broidery such ; but she

Stranger herself by far, nor to one form  
Constant, but various more than cloud or sea ;  
Now, as when erst beheld, a shape difform

From the high crag she frowned, with bat-like wings  
Shadowing the smoke wreaths of th' involving storm,  
And now with stateliest calm, that sceptred kings

Might from afar revere, a virgin Queen,  
Greater than they, supreme o'er earthly things :  
And now with shameless front and flaunted sheen

Of mimic pearl and gem, a harlot old,  
But clad in youth's array, that Power was seen.  
And a great crowd of semblance manifold,

Yet in one livery clad, her throne around  
Clustered as trooping sheep in evening fold.  
While from all sides to music tuned a sound

That reverence told and worship, to mid air  
Went up, like incense-mist from hallowed ground.  
Yet was no lord, no god, no ruler there

In worship owned by these ; nor other shrine  
Confessed, nor throne, nor rival, nor compeer.  
She only great, she glorious, she divine ;

And on her brow and on her vestment's hem  
Science, her name, was writ, her empire's sign.  
Round her pale brows a flickering diadem

Of that cold light was twined, and her right hand  
Held stripped of flower and fruit a sapless stem.  
Then while with wondering gaze the pomp I scanned

Of Time's last portent queen, from out the rest  
Came forth with reverent step a marshalled band.  
As stunted trees on the bare wind-blown West

Of Mona's farthest ledge, warped and awry,  
Unkindly skies and meagre soil attest,  
Such the procession seemed, that to the eye

Small solace gave or meed, yet was their mien  
Proud, as of conquerors come from victory.  
And with a several offering each the Queen

Approaching, homage made ; but she more cold  
Than wintry moon looked down on all serene.  
But all alike, subjects or Queen, in hold

That withered branch displayed, which erst I knew  
Her sceptre-wand, decked with false pearls and gold.  
Then thus my guide, "Where first the quickening dew

Gemmed with its tears earth's infant face, and where  
The central fount its fourfold stream upthrew,  
With scented rind and leaf and blossom fair,

But most with clustered fruit, conspicuous grew  
That branch, thou wondering seest, now peeled and bare.  
Of Knowledge this the tree, pleasant to view,

But death to taste ; so found the twain who erst  
Ventured the deed that yet the nations rue.  
Accursed the tree, the branch, the fruit ; accursed

She thou behold'st, of that ill growth the soul,  
Of man's mis-worshipped idols last and worst."  
Yet as he spoke, like marsh-fed mists that roll

Up the hill-sides at dawn of autumn day,  
O'er that great crowd a heavy vapour stole.  
And first the eyes that wilful turned away

From nature's offered scope to things removed  
From human sense and life's connatal ray,  
By measureless space estranged, or harmful proved

To daily sense of life, with envious gaze  
Prompt to explore, by vain compeers approved,—  
To the fair robe that Nature's form arrays,

Beauty of field or grove, and living grace  
Were feelingless grown, confused in self-made haze.  
And every power from ordered range and place

To wider scope outstretched, was warped and  
marred,

Like a strained chord, a mis-tuned diapase,  
From their true aim and healthful act debarred,

Till to the likeness of their work subdued  
In their own lore they find their fit reward.

And some with purpose fixed and serious mood

Pored on earth's writhing worms, or hour by  
hour

Watched through the optic glass corruption's brood.

And some the vigorous leaf or painted flower

Keen to dissect and class, of heart's delight  
Stripped the gay broidery of the garden bower.

And some the inmost life, the conscious light

Of the great Lamp of mind, with atom dust  
Smothered, or gave to chance and bestial might ;  
Duty to need-born custom, love to lust,

Reverence to coward fear, and beauty's sense  
To gain or use, scornful aside they thrust :

These in the infinite night's magnificence

A clockwork saw, no more ; in the bright sun  
A chemic force, a vapour rare or dense.

Till, as the camp-lit watch-fires one by one

'Twixt midnight fade and dawn, the ready foe  
Of onslaught sure, waits till the last be gone,—

So with their worshipped Queen that hapless show

Vanished in darkness lost ; a leaden weight,



Sunk in the fathomless ocean depths below.  
Such progress Science brings, such triumphs wait  
Her banner's onward march, such guerdon prove  
Who by her false-fires led, man's birthright state  
From Nature's scope divorce, from Nature's Love.

## CANTO XIV

I ask if any deliverance is proposed for these souls ; my guide seems to promise final lustration—Again as a dream I see the great City ; but now prepared for war—We enter, and see all scientific contrivances to kill and maim : Destruction throned on the seat of his consort Science—From this magazine of death goes forth an army, and I hear the roar of a ruined world, and see the fall of the city.

Again I ask my guide if no lustral ascent from this evil realm is allowed ?

“ In the seven realms of trial state whate’er  
Thou seest,” his answer came, “ to ends of good  
Ordained, finds harvest in th’ eternal year.”

He points upward—A mist overspreads the plain, and again reveals that great City, but not the throne of the crowned phantom :

Only from mart and square and lengthening street  
Such sound uprose as jutting rocks among  
Tells where opposing waters plunge and meet.  
Of horse, and rattling wheel, and noisy throng,  
Was now the unresting roar ; and heard between  
Were laugh and wailing loud, and tramp and song.  
Then with half-careless brow and smile serene  
Thus spoke my guide : “ Those noisy walls within

“Much to thy sight decreed remains unseen.  
Here let us enter now, nor fear the din,  
Nor aught uncouth behold ; a phantom show  
Of substance void, to morning dreams akin.  
As in frore Arctic seas who foremost go,  
Sundered awhile, by snow-reflected gleam  
In air pourtrayed their lagging comrades know,  
So what thou here behold'st itself a dream,  
Yet as of imaged truth,—alas that e'er  
Should true with false be blent,—the substance deem.”  
Thus while he spoke a portal wide and fair  
O'erarched our forward way, that street by street  
Led up the town, till reached the central square.  
Yet less the thronging crowd, though dense, our feet  
Delayed than wondering dread, as pause and gaze  
Who on their road some hideous portent meet.  
For not the Lycian cave nor Cretan maze,  
Though that Chimaera's fires, the portent fell  
This of Pasiphæe held, as Grecian lays  
Of old have sung, or storied legends tell,  
Could with the works of ill, the dooms compare  
By man for man forged in hate's citadel.  
For all that rends or maims, or wide in air  
Scatters the lacerate life, or swift from far  
Wings iron death, was piled in order there.  
And as o'er mangled crowds the demon car  
Moves 'mid Orissa's palms, so crushed and prone  
The nations lay 'neath science-hounded war :—  
While veiled in poisonous smoke, even on the throne  
Where erst his consort sat, with horror crowned  
O'er a slain world Destruction reigned alone.  
“And this,” so spoke my guide, “the ultimate bound  
Of man's research unblest, the freedom late  
From Nature's rule in death's own slavery found.  
Nor long the path, nor doubtful traced ;—the state  
Of its past self despoiled, of memory's wealth

“And art and joy and love made desolate.  
And the sure growth of sequent years, the health  
Treasured from age to age, for feverish dreams  
Of empty strife exchanged by thriftless stealth.  
Till strikes the fated hour, and from th’ extremes  
Of greed and hate together clashed, the brand  
Flashes o’er blackening walls and blood-stained streams,  
And wreaked th’ unnatured spite, the ruin planned  
By man’s unresting foe, the power accurst  
With mortal life knit in coeval band.”  
While thus he spoke, my wandering eyes that erst  
Confused the complex scene surveyed, as who  
At the full fount chokes from o’er-satiate thirst,  
Now steadier grown, the motley scene and new  
Had part with part compared ; and still the more  
I gazed, with terror mixed amazement grew.  
By sea, by land, by mountain plain or shore,  
For peace, for war, whate’er may blight or kill,  
Better in ignorance hid, destruction’s store,  
All that mechanic craft can frame, and skill  
Of chemic lore combine, with care upstored,  
A prisoned fiend apt to the jailer’s will,  
The all-solvent force from hell’s long guarded hoard  
Won to the winner’s bane ;—all these, and worse  
If worse might be, made up the pile abhorred.  
Knowledge of death, not life, in thee the curse  
Fulfilled of that bad hour to man that gave  
A reprobate self, a ruined universe !  
Then as by perilous seas Iona’s cave,  
Or pillared Staffa, thine, when fronts the moon  
Heaven’s western sun, fills to th’ o’erswollen wave,  
So to war’s challenge cry and answering tune  
Of fife and drum and brazen instrument  
Rolled on what seemed a demon host, and soon  
Was lost in sulphurous mist ; before it went  
Such roar as when from Indian skies descends

In darkness wreathed the typhoon element :—

Fields it lays waste, forests uptears, and rends ;

Village and tower and town and shrine of stone

Levelled with earth in heaped confusion blends ;

The scream of woman's fear, the shriek, the groan

Of wretches crushed, the mingling sounds of doom

In the undistinguished roar are heard as one.

Such was the roar went up from the deep gloom

Of victors shroud, and vanquished ; such the dirge

Of a slain world, knelled o'er dead Nature's tomb.

Then, as 'mid seas across from the far verge

Where broods the rising storm, a lengthening train

Their landward way the clamorous sea-fowl urge,

While from his cottage door th' upgazing swain

Fain would their number count, while band on band

Succeeding still makes his fond labour vain,—

So wild, so numerous, through that spectral night

New shapes of shapeless ill, of substance bare

And form, momentarily mocked the straining sight.

The crash of roadside ruin, the swift despair

Of ships together hurled, when all they hold

Of youth and strength and hope and life and care

Sinks to dark death, in trackless waters cold,

Th' explosion's sudden crash, when torn and rent,

Scattered the limbs that late that force controlled,—

And mixed with these the subtler poison sent

Unseen, unfelt, unknown, from fount and rill,

Sure vengeance of the misused element.

And earth's life-bearing bosom, the breasts that still

Were to her offspring health and strength and joy

Tainted and shamed mere poison-drops distil.

Fulfilled the cyclic course ; not Asian Troy

Nor Byrsa's<sup>1</sup> walls foredoomed, nor aught that years

Can frame, ages perfect, an hour destroy,

So desolate lay, so low, as o'er thy peers

<sup>1</sup> Carthage.

Exalted once, now lower fallen than they,  
Worthiest of doom predestined, worthiest tears !  
—Again I looked ; with pallid light the day  
Bordered the circling hills, and o'er a land  
Strewed with mere wrecks diffused a doubtful ray.  
Not desolate more nor hopeless by the strand,  
Moeris,<sup>1</sup> of thy lost waters, far outspread  
Recordless ruins break th' encroaching sand.  
'Mid a dead world, a city of the dead,  
Tomb of itself and them, by those who built  
Levelled in dust, self-dried the fountain bed.  
Then spoke my guide ; " The hopes, the life-blood spilt,  
Are but the debt repaid, the ransom fee  
Of nature's laws annulled, man's treason-guilt.  
In Eden's tainted bower the poison tree  
Had else unhewed remained, and age by age  
Such fruits had borne as by Zeboim's sea  
The kindred groves accurst ;—the jealous rage  
Of international strife, the cruel skill  
Of treacherous hate, the vengeful heritage  
Of trampled pride and ill outfaced by ill,  
These were the doom of earth, through boundless time  
Accursed, a wandering star, a frustrate will.  
Now by swift death to life recalled, the crime  
Atoned, from nature's bounds no more to rove  
Is the new birth, a renovate star sublime  
In the pure depths of empyrean Love."

<sup>1</sup> A lake in ancient Egypt.

## CANTO XV

The storm has passed—Another female figure appears ; lawless  
Republican Freedom — She relates her history — Wicked  
passions and political falsehoods surround her—They fade,  
and a lovely vision of the life after Nature, which alone is true  
Freedom, follows.

YET once again thou bid'st me, once again  
Lord of my song, my vision's arbiter,  
Of that sad realm renew th' ungrateful strain.  
Not mine to choose the key ; all sounds that are  
Joyous or sad, discord or harmony,  
Each at thy will their pinions fold or stir.  
Then while alone beneath that other sky  
Not of man's earth we stood, and on the space  
Open and bare the shadows glided by,  
But of that whirlwind crowd, the hideous chase  
Of spectre deaths unnamed, of the great storm  
O'er-curtaining all, was there nor sign nor trace,  
But in its stead what seemed a female form,  
But armed with sword and helm, and countenance  
With envious sneer and hasty wrath difform,  
Stood where of late that town ; to heaven her glance  
Upturned defiance told, unbound her hair  
Streamed as a Maenad's in the drunken dance.  
Wrought to her hand a ready axe and bare

Gleamed at her side ; in her right hand a scroll  
Banner-like shifted to the shifting air.

And many dates and names that boastful roll

Now here now there displayed, but most as read  
From memory passed to mere effacement's goal.

Drunken, but not with wine, her restless tread

Uncertain moved of aim ; her feet beneath  
Piecemeal with broken shards the ground was spread.

And trampled laws were there, and ancient faith

Trodden in dust, and loyal vows and true  
Cancelled, and soiled with blood a kingly wreath

While with no certain sound a trumpet blew

Fantastic march and self-involved, that still  
Th' advancing step in backward circles drew.

As who some wretch distort with cureless ill

Meets, and the foulness seen, the more abhorred,  
The more to gaze compels th' unwilling will :

So was I then, nor less my vision's Lord

Scanned that unlovely form, nor to my look  
Enquiring turned, by sign replied or word,

That from his silence added fear I took.

Nor wonder ye that hear, for things of dread

Owined by immortals how may mortals brook ?

Then where we stood, with bold and sudden tread

That form towards us came, in haunted room

As some foul spectre nears the sleeper's bed.

And a chill air as from a vaulted tomb

Upbreathed around it spread, and all around

A sound of moving wings, unseen in gloom.

And now 'twixt us and it of sundering ground

Ten paces scarce remained, when bold and clear,

Ere question asked, her answer utterance found.

"From earth, my proper kingdom, brought, and here

In visioned form compelled, in me the power

Behold that was and is and yet shall be.

When first, as legends tell, in Eden's bower



“Was the great freedom won that man from law  
Loosed, from the lord the slave, mine was the hour ;  
The victory mine, the witching spells that draw  
All noblest things to shapeless heaps, as spread  
Swift floods in level lowlands, fire in straw.  
So secret sure, so swift, each trusted creed,  
Each rule of firmest stay, altar and throne,  
Fall in the day by fate and me decreed.  
Till the last links of custom’s honoured zone  
Are loosed, and mightiest nations, taught by me,  
Their parent past and proper selves disown :  
From all that binds, restrains, and orders, free  
As dust that late was man, or shifting sand  
Drawn grain by grain to the undiscerning sea.  
The while all stateliest things, all fairest planned,  
Heirlooms of time, a nation’s diadem<sup>1</sup>  
Shivered by me in fragments strew the strand.  
The wrongs of gods and kings, the rights of man,  
My watchwords these, my spells ; with these of yore  
In the great strife I led destruction’s van.  
When the blue waves that lave Corcyra’s shore  
Reddened with blood,<sup>2</sup> and shamed Miletus<sup>3</sup> viewed  
The nameless horrors of her harvest floor,—  
These were my first essays ; in mightier mood  
Surpassed, when at my word the tribune band,  
Rome, from thy rock drew streams of Roman blood,  
When as cut flowers that strew the summer land  
Mown by the reaper’s scythe, thy noblest peers  
Corpse-strewed the halls their fathers’ pride had planned.  
And still as to the load of added years  
Bows down th’ enfeebled earth, till wholly fail  
The central power that yet the frame uprears,  
Honour and truth and law, like phantoms pale  
Of a lost world, from the uncreating spell

<sup>1</sup> *Sic* MS.<sup>2</sup> The famous massacre in B.C. 427.<sup>3</sup> Sacked by Darius in B.C. 494.

“Of Freedom’s dreaded name retire and quail.  
What fabric mine beyond th’ Atlantic swell

Of Indian blood compact and Afric’s groans  
Let my great shrine, the first Republic, tell.  
But chief where on the Abbey’s<sup>1</sup> desecrate stones

Women with children, maids with helpless age,  
To Freedom’s birthday paean tuned their moans.  
Since then my forward track from [age to age]<sup>2</sup>

Prosper, and march of mind and liberty  
In blood and spoil are marked in History’s page.  
As creeps the fire through rotten wood and dry,

As filters poison through the tainted stream,  
As breathing death the plague from cloudless sky,  
So through all things that best and fairest seem

My sure corruption spreads, till fade from earth  
Empires and faiths, an unreturning dream ;  
And precious things long prized, and things of worth

Mine to debase, by me dissolved and ended  
In the wide death that knows no second birth.”  
Thus while she spoke the ghastly forms that tended

Unseen before her song, unnatural will,  
Envy, and idiot pride with rapine blended,  
And the dark thoughts that worm-like feed on ill,

And bitter hates and loathsome phantasies,  
And trust for show betrayed, and joys that kill,  
And party froth of popular speech, and lies

Worshipped for very truth, and last despair,  
Swarmed round their worshipped Queen as carrion flies  
Round their foul food ; all distant semblance fair

From that proud form they took ; the mirror they  
Of her true self, through them revealed and bare.  
So passed the portent on, while far away

E’en to the visible marge its path along  
Trampled in blood th’ adoring nations lay.

<sup>1</sup> Massacre of the clergy by the Republicans (September 1792)  
in the Carmelite Abbaye.

<sup>2</sup> *Zone* in MS.

What next I saw nor mortal tongue nor song  
To mortal ears attuned may tell ; nor how  
Slain the foul slayer, avenged the secular wrong.

But my guide does not enable me to tell more.

As who at dawn awaking with quick start  
Feels in himself the dream he dreamed, yet nought  
Imaged recalls, nor part can join with part ;  
So what my soul unchanged retains, my thought

Fails to retrace ; a treasure stored, but lost  
The key, and memory's blank with memory fraught.  
Then linked once more the chain : that evil host,  
With her the band who led, that false though fair  
Phantom of self-styled Freedom's conquering boast,  
Dead with the dead themselves had slain, even there

On earth mere hollow semblance lay, to dust  
Aptly dissolved, even as their triumphs were.  
And in their place and hers, as from dull rust  
Glitters a furbished brand, a loveliness  
Human-divine revealed old Nature's trust.  
In its own beauty veiled that form ; nor less  
All hearts to her she drew ; before her way  
Bloomed with new flowers the wreck-strewn wilderness.  
And as a blackening shadow-line that lay

Late on the green hill side, before the breath  
Of sunlit heaven, unmarked dissolves away,  
So in that vision new those forms of death  
Dissolving passed from sight, and heavenly life  
By earthly life was mirrored from beneath.

Uptorn the poisonous root, the knowledge rife  
With doom, earth's primal wrong, and wiser Man  
No more with Nature held unnatured strife :—  
Till to the modulate note with which began

Life's music, moved the dance, and freshly wove  
Nature and ordered law the purposed plan  
Of the high power that circles all in Love.

## CANTO XVI

A vision of England's glory, and a lament—A land of wonderful beauty is now seen, and a Siren voice invites me to the happiness of the Seventh Realm—I feel the attraction, calling me to yield : but my guide wakens me from the charm.

EMPRESS of land and waters, foremost thou

In earth's processioned pride, all else to thee,  
Subjects or foes, allies or rivals bow ;

England, Time's sceptred heir, of Liberty

Wedded to Law the home ; by thee the vaunt  
Of Rome or earlier Greece is held in fee.

Who with just pride behold'st thy standards flaunt

Of every sky the arc, from the mid zone  
Broadened to either winter's year-long haunt.

Mother of states and statesmen, from thy throne

O'er thought and deed supreme, wisest and best  
Thee with forced praise earth's jealous Balaams own.  
Phoenix of ages, in thy island nest

Once and again renewed from fiery pain,  
Fresh plumed with mightier wings and prouder crest :  
And if of earth's cloud fabrics might remain

Eternal aught, 'twere thou, 'mid things of change  
Changeless, a rock 'mid ocean's shifting plain.  
Land of my birth, first known, first loved, the range

Of treasured childhood's dreams, long exiled years  
That first best vision dim not nor estrange.  
Whence then th' o'ershadowing gloom, the formless  
fears

Like night birds winged at even, that o'er my thought  
Darkened, and filled my gazing eyes with tears?  
When now to that sixth realm a visitant brought

Where science finds her meed, the penal doom  
Of that proud city in presence thus was wrought?  
Not thus, not thus thy type; yet 'mid the gloom

That whelmed the visioned sense, methought I knew  
Writ with thy name, even thine, a Titan tomb.  
Through moonless nights of shade in doubtful view

So lours the Shinaar pile, memorial lone  
Of banded pride, earth's heaven-assailing crew.  
Like effort, like reward; the flower o'erblown

Falls from th' unpetalled stalk, the statued form  
By its own weight shivered and overthrown.  
And in the brightest sky the wildest storm

Broods unsuspect though near, and in the vest  
Of gold-throned empire lurks the charnel worm.  
What worm thou know'st, what tempest:—for the rest

Fulfil thy portioned task, the destiny  
Warp of earth's portioned woof for worst or best.  
Changed now the scene, the song; Another sky

Bent o'er us where we stood, another land  
Worthy that heaven in beauty took the eye.  
But how from that dark region's farther strand,

Where late our visioned path had been, to this  
Sudden we passed, not mine to understand.  
Behind us pain and ruin, before us bliss

Myriad in form yet one, so heaven and earth  
Mingled in each an individual kiss.  
As a fair babe at earliest hour of birth

Is beauty, life and joy, before us smiled  
Fresh to th' embrace that love-irradiate mirth.

Not the fair land<sup>1</sup> that of their course beguiled  
Ithaca's homeward crew, nor that by God  
Planted in midmost of Thelassar's wild,  
Could with this garden vie ; nor that, th' abode  
Of Perse's daughter-witch,<sup>2</sup> nor the far groves<sup>3</sup>  
Spoiled by Alcides of their golden load.  
But these were fairer found ; the fancy roves  
Vainly their like to find, all ages tries,  
All beauteous things, nor aught as these approves.  
Ah me ! from the dark realm of worse surmise  
What difference this, what joy, when seen again  
Green earth, bright flowers, pure rivulets, azure skies.  
As who some landscape rare of mount or plain  
Known but by name now first beholds, and more  
Than thought had given to hope, accounts his gain :—  
From the dim horrors of the unnatured shore  
So I to nature's best restored ; for naught  
Valued<sup>4</sup> to this all joys esteemed before.  
And sense on wakening sense and thought on thought  
Crowded in throng confused, that to my heart  
Faintness for very joy an instant brought,  
And but the brother guide whose guardian art  
Failed not, upheld me then, nor sense nor breath  
Had mine remained, so keen the pleasing smart.  
On a high ledge we stood ; the plain beneath  
In myriad hues, all lovely, to the sun  
Sparkled with gems woven in innumerable wreath,  
And meads and brimming streams, and flowers that  
shone,  
And ripening orbs of gold, and tufted glades  
From the hill marge to the vision's utmost zone,  
In varying beauty spread, of lights with shades  
In just proportion joined, that once beheld

<sup>1</sup> Ogygia.<sup>2</sup> Aeaea, Circe's dwelling.<sup>3</sup> Hesperides.<sup>4</sup> Compared.

From lovesick memory passes not nor fades.  
Then while entranced I gazed, motionless held

By that fair scene, a sound on odours rare  
Pillowed, as smoke of incense wreaths upwelled ;  
The while the rustling leaves at dance, the beat

Of wavelets on their banks, the answering cries  
Of happy birds, mazed in their green retreat,  
And other sounds attuned to harmonies

Confusedly heard with sound of voice, that lent  
To leaves and birds and wavelets apt replies,  
Their strong enchantment wove ; and lovelier bent

O'er me the vaulted blue, that my whole being  
Forth from itself to greet that music went.  
Its own surcease by its own act decreeing,

Such magic drew me on, from fear and pain  
And forward hope and past remembrance freeing.  
The while, now first distinct, a Siren strain

Borne on the perfumed air to where I stood  
Sent out the enchantment of the midmost plain.  
And then the words I heard ; "From labours rude

Here the repose attained, the joy, the rest ;  
Here the fair prime of love and youth renewed ;  
As from long fray returned when red the West

Gleams o'er the hard-fought field, to dreamless sleep  
Sinks the tired warrior on the loved one's breast.  
Such welcome thine, such calm ; the perilous steep

Hast thou secure o'erpast, the guardian hours  
For thee with us inviolate refuge keep.

For thee the couch prepared ; less fair the flowers

That healing breathe and balm where beauty's Queen  
Bends o'er Adonis in Idalian bowers.

Ambition's doubtful prize, Art's painted screen,

Love's passionate draught, Religion's visioned hope,  
Slow toil of knowledge stored, and Science keen,—

The sixfold task on which heaven's pitying cope

Looks down, but little heeds, withal hast thou

“Traversed, the aimless aim, th’ unequal scope.  
Here then thy sail be furled ; the o’erhasty vow  
Best when forsworn fulfilled ; life’s proffered joys  
Be thine, th’ Hesperian isle, the lotus bough.  
Here where no satiate zest the palate cloy

Ever to new renewed ; nor age nor care  
This garden blight, nor envious time destroys.”  
Thus sang the secret voice till the warm air

Was drunken sweet with song, and all my heart,  
Tangled with joys new found, lay captive there.  
Till by a touch aroused, with sudden start.

I turned, and met those eyes whose searching ray  
Pierced my remorseful soul with conscious smart.  
As bent on deed forbid or harmful play

Shrinks back the self-chid child, if chance he sees,  
When least bethought, his father’s grave survey ;  
So from that sensuous dream of careless ease

With shame suffused I woke, and gazing sought  
In that loved face from the false charm release.  
Then he to whom th’ unspoken words my thought

In its true self declared, to this my wound  
Healing and balm with ready answer brought.  
“Fear not,” he said, “nor faint ; the purpose sound

In weakness perfects strength ; the lily flower  
Sprung from the soil, a stainless queen is crowned.  
O’er life of sense compact that sense has power

Nor wonder much nor blame ; what child of earth  
But smooth to rough and sweet prefers to sour ?

But the absolute Will has given thee a nobler nature and  
better light.

Here where all pleasing lures of sound and sight,

Odour, or touch, or taste, entwine the chain  
Where phantom joys with lustral pains unite,  
Whate’er old poets sing or legends feign



“Sirens or Lotus groves, or Circe wiles,  
End and fulfilment in this realm attain.  
Here who from life's due task and prize the wiles  
Of the great sorceress prisoners held, in sorrow  
Masked by lost joy abide their cleansing while.  
Till pure the spirit greet th' ethereal morrow,  
Bright star of stainless dawn ; till then the grove  
Thou seest confines their range, compelled to borrow  
From folly past late lore of ransoming Love.”

## CANTO XVII

Into this Paradise we descend—A Satyr guides : an illusive sense of delight seizes me—I see a visionary plain, with a sky of wonderful tints—This mirage vanishes in white light : the forest reappears, but glowing with rainbow colours, and flitting forms of beauty between—The sensation of Youth comes over me—The Satyr explains that this is a kind of twilight region between the Realms and the abyss lying between earth and heaven—The indwellers seem to have, and yet to have not, every sensuous pleasure, whilst awaiting final lustration—The Satyr and all his kind are, however, fated to pass away.

THUS while he spoke such breeze as wakes to song  
The summer birds at dawn, from off the height  
Passed in long waves the forest tops along.  
And glossy leaves and flowers embossed in white  
Rustled and waved around, till all the wood  
Thrilled with expectance of some new delight.  
So from the rock-faced ledge in cheerful mood  
Downward our steps we turned, till on the plain  
Knee-deep in scented herbs and flowers we stood.  
A narrow space we trod ; in serried row  
Before us rose the trees, the rock behind,  
That exit thence or entrance none might know.  
Silent awhile we paused, the doubtful mind  
Holding in equal poise, perchance to wait  
Or road-directing chance, or guide assigned.

Nor long ere issuing forth, in form and gait  
Nor human all nor bestial, one that seemed  
Of Satyr brood as rustic tales relate,  
Naked before us stood ; in sunlight gleamed

Hazel his laughing eyes ; who scanned his face  
In youthful mask had quaint Silenus deemed.  
No word he spoke, but as in natural grace

All forest things are fair, a willing guide  
Waiting he stood, self-offered there in place.  
Then by a narrow cleft erst undescried

Midmost the grove he led, 'twixt branch and bough  
Gliding secure, as woodland serpents glide.  
And still from step to step I wondered how

Following unchecked we passed, where else the eye  
Mere hindrance found, but ready access none.  
And overhead enlaced the branches high

Shut out the vaulted heaven, and from behind  
Closed on our path their green perplexity.  
The while that sylvan form of gentlest kind

Oft turned our way t' assure, with merry look  
As a quick sunbeam glanced through cloudy blind.  
And aye from that bright smile presentment took

My soul of near delight, and inly thought,—  
If such the outward clasp, how fair the book !  
How long we fared or far, who thither brought

Our steps may rightliest know ; but I for joy .  
Of time or measured space accounted nought.  
For fear, and fear-bred care, and doubt's annoy

Could here no entrance find, nor weariness  
Might with earth's dross that perfect hour alloy.  
O happy rest, though vain ! O nothingness

Of earth's existence fitting meed repaid !  
How shall my verse thy joys, thy pains express ?  
So on we passed, and still the close-fenced glade

More distant view denied, and oft the cry  
Of some hid bird in laughing mockery played.

And oft aside I looked if chance to espy

Some human guide the trees between ; but none  
Save that quaint shape, the wood's own progeny.  
Nor he to question asked or speech begun

Answer or heed returned, but smiled as who  
Silence had vowed till task or pastime done.  
At last on either hand the opening view

Gave a great plain to sight, if plain it were,  
Or vaporous film compact to form and hue.  
Not the cloud-domes upbuilt in Indian air,  
Crimson and pink and gold, where rests at even  
The out-journeyed sun, might with those tints compare.  
If unsubstantial earth or solid heaven

That gem-bespangled floor, those crags up-piled  
Of glittering pearl with glancing fire-streaks riven,  
Was what I then beheld, a phantom wild

Where truth was not, nor being, nor firm abode  
Of life with joy, of their old strife beguiled,—  
I knew not nor enquired ; so changeful glowed  
The rainbow-textured domes, so bright the lines  
Where through the clefts the golden pavement showed.  
Then as from spray to spray, when warmer shines

Th' encroaching day, the night-embroidered frost  
Melts off confused from the sun-fronted pines ;  
So all that varied weft, broken and crost

As by some eddying under-flow, from sight  
In one white radiance passed confusedly lost.  
And the fair woodland from th' encircling height

First seen, returned to view, but fairer now  
Than maiden coy new decked for love's delight.  
For where that mist had been, each summit bough,

Hill top or palace spire, was wrapped and hung  
With tangled shreds of heaven's Thaumantian bow.  
And the broad leaves and large-eyed flowers among

Flitted translucent gleams, that with the flowers  
In brightness blent, as music blends with song.

And shapes half seen, half guessed, by glades and bowers  
Naked or gaily dight, as those beheld  
In haunted gardens at still noontide hours.  
I gazed and gazed again ; with pleasure swelled  
Almost to pain my heart, and to my eyes  
Tears, to my mind far-memored thoughts upwelled ;  
The days when youth and I were one, the skies  
Of Spring o'erarching Spring, the untarnished ray  
That life to earth, light to the sun supplies.  
O gift but once bestowed, unmorrowed day  
Quick dawned, darkened ere noon ; O crowning  
bloom,  
Of the green stem fulfilment and decay !  
Yet of that perished flower the lost perfume  
Again was mine to prove, from time's restraint  
Freed in the pageant realm of meed and doom.  
Thus while I stood, that guide whose semblance quaint  
Of twofold kin compact resumed in one,  
A forest birth, as wild-flower free from taint,  
Fruitful as earth, glad as the quickening sun,  
Towards me turned his face, of all beside  
Heedless, and thus with human speech begun.  
" Earth-born, to thee, not to thy spirit-guide  
Of earth exempt, my words ; in kindred blood  
Is kindred speech, to alien race denied.  
Know then the rocks o'erpast, the silent wood,  
The rainbow mists, the meteors in their sport,  
Guard the seventh realm placed in the lustral flood.  
The ultimate limits these, th' extreme resort  
Of life by time distinct, the boundary this  
Ere reached the portals of th' ethereal court.  
Behind, the multiple forms, before, th' abyss  
Formless to mortal sense ; betwixt the twain,  
Twilight of each, thou seest the bowers of bliss.  
Here the last flush of being's feverish pain  
Dies in the calm eterne, as lost at morn

"Melts into day's pure light the lunar stain.

The restless toil, the care, the strife, the scorn

Enter not here nor bide ; the painted fly

Here has no sting, the blossomed rose no thorn.

As sleeps the child secure, his mother nigh

Watchful to tend and guard, so from all wrong

Sure fenced the land sleeps 'neath its own bright sky."

Thus while he spoke the sound of harp and song

Ere now from distance heard, across the mere

Like birds in level flight came swift and strong ;

And on the glittering shore in presence near

Such witching forms I saw as magic nights

Image, when right the spell, the crystal clear.

Processions ranged, and dance, and quaint delights,

Bubbles of joy's full glass, and vestments gay

With myriad hues, and gems from mountain heights,

And eyes more bright than these, and as the day

That knows not veil nor needs, the loveliness

Of naked forms, unshamed in careless play.

Then thus, ere question asked, that guide no less

Made to my thought reply, "Lest things beheld

Should the true meaning hide 'neath sight's excess,

Whom here thou seest from the full life withheld

Awhile by just decree, in longing pain

Frustrate by dreamy joys are captive held.

And some with frustrate toil their heads in vain

Would with fresh roses crown, and thirsting still

Some with hot lips elusive goblets drain.

All that on earth sufficed the sensuous will

Is present here in full, yet all and none

Can the deep want assuage, or craving still."

Awhile he paused ; then with changed tones, as one

Who hears what fain he would not, yet for fleeing

No outlet finds, filled up the tale begun,

And said, "In narrower bounds of Fate's decreeing

Is our existence bound, our little day

"Has but with this fair realm commensurate being ;  
Till as a fount dried up, a faded ray

\* From a shot star, with all thou seest in place,  
To the great depths we pass from form away.  
I too with these must pass ; with these my race

Ends in a blank, the goal ; and all we are  
Lost in unpersoned life and formless space,"

He ceased and wept ; from sightless realms afar

Came answering sounds of grief, while from above  
Darkened the heavens, all but the steadfast star

Changeless in change, the enfolding star of Love.

## CANTO XVIII

From this seemingly preliminary region we approach the Seventh realm itself—My guide describes the Satyr's peculiar sphere of life—We now coast the stream which islands the seven kingdoms—The Satyr reappears in fresh beauty: he and the guide bear me across, and I see a fair country, on which we land—The Satyr vanishes as we enter the realm of Sensual Pleasure.

WHO by the victim deer fresh-slain has stood  
Afield, and the bright eye now glazed and dim  
Has watched, and the fair limbs defiled with blood,  
But has not inly wished that even on him  
Sooner than on that harmless helplessness  
Had fallen of hasty fate the shadow grim?  
At least not I; how then that just distress  
Of nature's veriest child unmoved could I  
Behold, or my fast-thronging tears repress?  
But he, my brother guide, whose spirit high  
Bent not to idle grief, with grave rebuke  
Turned on my tear-stained cheeks a blameful eye.  
Then in his own, of strength compact, he took  
My hand and gently pressed, and to his own  
Upraised in half-reproach my downward look:  
And thus; "By fairest forms the shadows thrown  
Are fleeting none the less; by change, whate'er



“Exists, or soon or late must form disown.  
Nor vigorous seeming life, nor beauty rare  
In form and shape may but one hour outlast  
The power that wrought them, and the type they  
wear.

The present joy is theirs ; future or past  
Can vex them not nor harm ; not theirs but thine  
The shadowed grief in semblance o’er thee cast.  
The flower that fades with eve, the golden line  
Traced by a dying day, the yellowing leaf,  
The showers that passing gleam, the suns that shine,—  
Each while it lasts complete, existence brief  
Sums as eterne ; nor here for querulous moan  
Is room, nor idle tears of sensuous grief.  
No guerdon his t’ attain, nor fault t’ atone,  
With Nature one the Faun ; nor passion’s chain  
Draws him astray ; thyself hast forged thy own.”

We approach the seventh realm, and my guide dis-  
courses with me of things not to be here communi-  
cated.

“The stream whose banks,” thus spoke my guide,  
“along

Our pathway leads, whose circling waters sweep  
Past yon fair land in current swift and strong,  
From the far fountains of the limitless deep  
Its source derives and flow, where change and time  
Are girdled-in by the all-sustaining sleep.  
On these, time’s farthest shores, the sevenfold clime  
An island shows, no more, though wide in view  
Reach the broad plains, cloud-high the mountains  
climb.”

Here paused his speech awhile, then thus, “Renew  
The memoried scene, when passed the perilous  
height

“Oped on thy wondering gaze the landscape new,  
And know of all that hour revealed to sight  
Nothing untrod but this remains, th’ abode  
Of pain as bliss and darkness masked as light.”  
Scarce had he spoke when midway, where the road  
Down to the margent led, and crystal-pure  
O’er furrowed sands downshelved the waters flowed,  
He who at first our steps with playful lure  
Had through the forest led, then left awhile,  
Before us stood, the vision’s Cynosure.  
In Ida’s groves, or Sylvan-haunted isle,  
Samos or ancient Crete, no shape more fair  
Greeted with answering glance an Oread’s smile.  
Round his lithe limbs in joyous clasp the air  
Burst into meteor light ; a staff entwined  
With vine and rose his poising hand upbore.

The Satyr explains that he and the Guide must  
bear me across the waters—On the other side a  
fair landscape, a region of pleasure, appears.

And O, such was my thought, if this the cage  
That keeps imprisoned Love, what paradise  
Can to deliverance hence Desire engage?  
If all so sweet the failure, what the prize  
Offered to victory’s grasp? or who these joys  
Beholding, want or pain could here surmise?

We hear sweet music, and land.

Then spoke that sylvan form, “The mandate given  
By her whose realm thou seest, Nature’s abode  
Favoured o’er all, though hers be all the seven,  
Have I this hour fulfilled ; thus far the road  
Through joyous scenes or sad, pleasure or pain  
To mortals due, mortal thyself hast trod.”

Here I am to learn Life's last deceit—The Satyr  
vanishes.

Then spoke my brother guide ; " In part his tale  
He told, in part concealed ; nor even here  
Wholly the mist dispelled, withdrawn the veil,  
Though the far verge of time's enfolding sphere  
Hast thou attained, and on the margin stood  
Ringed by the stillness of the dateless year :"  
Nor added more ; but to the neighbouring wood  
My following footsteps led, the central grove  
Of the seventh realm, where bide whom sensuous  
good  
Drew from the better choice, the Uranian Love.

## CANTO XIX

Love as Queen of the world is sung by two choirs, gay and sad :  
Gay representing the old Greek Satyr and Nymph existence :  
Sad, the state of human creatures devoted to the senses—In  
them I feel my past life reflected—Certain Asiatic voluptuary  
sovereigns are now seen, whilst Queen Love shines forth in  
higher beauty—Sardanapalus tells us his experiences of pleasure  
and satiety.

MISTRESS and fount of all delight that earth  
By mount or fruitful plain, by air and sky  
Portions to all who of her womb have birth ;—  
Queen of the . . . spell whose witchery  
Subtle as fire, as death resistless, leaves  
Barren the land, the fountain choked and dry ;—  
Lady of pitying grace, whose favour weaves  
Bands for the world's deep wound ; from whose full  
treasure  
Each want supply, each anguish balm receives ;—  
Lady of cruel pain, whose daemon pleasure  
Is in the torture fed of those by fate  
Drawn in thy clueless maze of magic measure :—  
Thine from the untempered chaos to create  
All form, all life, all beauty ; these by thee  
Framed and to fullness brought, attend thy state :—  
Thine the all-reaching blight, the poison-tree

Whose roots this earth entwine, whose branching shade  
Blots to not-being all \*fairest\* things that be :—  
In thee our hopes, our joys ; in thee pourtrayed  
All that of ours is best ; in thee whate'er  
Has music, art, or rarest nature made.  
All precious . . . , all loveliest known and rare,  
Touched by thy wand, of beast, or flower, or bird,  
Wither in dust deform and perish there.

I marvel at what I hear and see ;

For there from fountain-marge and forest green  
Satyr and Nymph and Oread, every form  
Broidered on the young world's terraqueous screen,  
Hymned on the right her praise ; as breezes warm  
From isles of Indian spice, the music sweet  
Breathed the whole heart of that bi-natured swarm.  
O happy heart, in its own love complete !  
O happy love, that heart's fit denizen !  
O happy life, such heart, such love, to greet !

An array, young and old, mustered on the other side of  
Love's throne, stood in sad repentance, so

That with their grief I grieved ; a like lament  
To theirs, as like the cause ; nor alien all  
From mine their fault, nor the fault's chastisement.  
As who, when first a guest, some galleried hall  
With curious care explores, and pleased surveys  
Gay with the pictured past each panelled wall ;  
And some t' ancestral blame, and some to praise  
Witness in scene pourtrayed ; but all to him  
Alien, as of stranger race and distant days ;  
If sudden these amidst in form or limb  
He his own semblance sees, and \*action\*, thought  
Unknown imaged beholds in semblance grim,

Amazed he stares, and "By what magic brought  
Hither," he thinks, this portent ill, from old  
By prescient hate or sorcerer's malice wrought,—  
So in an alien tale my own o'ertold

Beholding these, I read from first to last  
As on a pictured screen by priests unrolled,  
Through every realm of trial-change o'erpast

From the high proffered crown, that o'er the gate  
Pendant allures, to the far-margined waste.

My guide warns and comforts me.

This said, he pointed where in midmost throng

Of those his words declared, a seemingly band,  
Clad in such robes as to great kings belong,  
In silent conclave sate ; not by the strand

Of Egypt's desolate stream more proudly calm  
Memnon's vast bulk o'erlooks the Ophian land.

I see Venus now in highest splendour, with Asiatic adorers  
before her—Sardanapalus asks our sympathy, and  
tells his glory, his pleasures, his satiety, and his  
greatest grief, the remaining sting of vain desire.

## CANTO XX

Roman chiefs appear : Lucullus, Caesar,—those who failed to fulfil  
their higher aims,—Sylla, and others ; Antony with Cleopatra ;  
then Alcibiades is seen, and by him his friend Socrates—He  
describes the fall of Greece and his own death, with a vague  
prophetic intimation of a greater Martyrdom.

HE ceased ; and from around, the kindred throng  
Monarchs and shadows of that earlier day,  
Took up of frustrate life the choral song,  
Sad music to sad words ; but she whose sway  
In her own living right was manifest there,  
Smiled her acceptance of that penitent lay.  
And to her smile that wanton crowd and fair,  
Sylvans and Nymphs and Fauns and Dryades,  
Brightened with answering smiles the woodland air.  
O'er the whelmed treasures of the . . . seas  
So smile the gleaming waves, a smile that ill  
With the lost wrecks itself beguiled agrees.  
But I from those strange founts in hope to fill  
My spirit's eager thirst, my farther view  
Raised to the summit of a neighbouring hill,  
Where in fair robes and calm aspect a crew  
Of honoured strain, so seemed their guise, apart  
From those who joyed or mourned, enthroned I knew.

I recognize Lucullus and others who threw away great  
actions for pleasant sloth : Here is Sylla :

Smiling he sat, with roses crowned, as who  
Had heart's desire attained ; but o'er his head  
With blood-stained wings outstretched a horror flew.

There also lies the headless trunk of Mark Antony :—

While thus my guide ; “ As fullest orb'd the moon  
Nearest eclipse is found, as winter bare  
Lurks ambushed in the leafy boughs of June,  
So to fulfilled desire desire's despair  
Is twinned in earth's vain dream, and worst of ill  
Memoried, or future feared, is present there.  
And who most fenced with self-enjoyment, still  
Is from enjoyment most shut out ; nor long  
From love's true source self-sundered flows the rill.”

Then Cleopatra, and others whose

lightsome mood

Game of life's earnest, earnest made of game.  
And these amidst, as 'mid a gathered brood  
Of sea-fowl towers the great bird to snows  
Antarctic known, a mighty form there stood.  
Fair as a god's his form, but manhood's rose  
Bloomed on his sunburnt cheek, nor lacked the trace  
Of labouring thought, and passion's wayward throes.  
Yet as the noonday plain in light, in grace  
So was each feature steeped ; nor care nor crime  
Could mar the calm perfection of that face.  
[Though] stained the pages of thy storied time  
With crimes and cares, yet through all ages who,  
O son of Clinias, to thy height may climb ?  
As some rare Indian flower in scent and hue  
Peerless as poisonous known, allures and kills,



A upas-bloom to Greece that beauty grew.

In beauty's Circe-cup thy deadliest ills,

Hellas, were mixed ; through her the power malign  
On fairest things its worst designs fulfils.

Thus while I mused and gazed, a beckoning sign

Drew me towards the mount, summoned by him

The glory and shame of old Alcmaeon's<sup>1</sup> line.

There at my near approach an outline dim

In wondrous form deform was there, as Pan

Masked for Silenus in Evoeian<sup>2</sup> whim.

My guide paints the character and career of Alcibiades

—The gay crowd vanishes,

And the brute phalanx-swarms of Thracian brood  
O'er murdered Hellas drew th' Emathian shroud.<sup>3</sup>

Plato then appears, and tells the vanity of pleasure  
disjoined from virtue.

"This thy predestinate doom, Athena, mourned

By man-befriending gods ; for linked with thine

In whelming gloom earth's freshness was inurned.

And others there are, lands by slow decline

To like dishonour led, from age to age

Silver with dross, with water mixed the wine.

This was I ware ; what most was mine the page,

Shrine of undying truth, may tell ; the hate

Of envy bred, the accuser's perjured rage,

These mixed the hemlock cup ; by these the fate

Portioned to worth's excess ; in me fulfilled

Loomed the presentment of each later date,

But more——" Here ceased abrupt his speech, as thrilled

By a far thought, a lightning flash that clove

The infinite depths of being, till lost and stilled

In the white radiance of unpersonal Love.

<sup>1</sup> The great family from which Alcibiades claimed descent,  
through his mother Deinomache.

<sup>2</sup> Bacchanalian.

<sup>3</sup> The lordship of Alexander.

## CANTO XXI

A fair scene opens : It is the Italian Renaissance—Petrarch, as the Chief, is singing—The Sicilian Idyllists ; the English, characterized—Lament and prophecy for Italy.

MAY morns, May flowers, May meadows, May delights,  
To these the song was tuned that, where we stood  
Rose to my ear from thwart the laurelled heights.  
Sweet were the notes and strange that the dull blood  
To livelier pulses quivering waked, as when  
Thrills to the cuckoo's note the summer wood,  
And life itself to music turned ; and then,  
Most like sharp discord, silence came, or ill  
At jar with good, till flowed the notes again.  
Then said my brother-guide ; " Beyond the hill  
Fronting our view, in their own bounds apart  
A songster band the vale with music fill.  
These,—when from Western beauty, Western art,  
Slow passed the shades of barbarous night, the dawn  
Waked to new life long-slain Ausonia's heart,—  
From wrangling faction-cries and hate withdrawn,  
Of Grecian form and Roman stateliness  
Fenced for themselves a fancy-guarded lawn ;  
Famine without and blood and sore distress  
Of field and town ; but they, secure of harm,

“Toyed with the hours in pleasure’s still recess ;  
Nor birthright pride, nor stranger-wrong the charm  
    Could loose their soul that bound, or tune the strain  
To patriot notes, or nerve the listless arm.  
Or if for a brief space aroused, again  
    With womanish plaint or children’s rhymester-play  
In tinsel folds they wrapped the nobler pain.”  
Then I, “Nor Siren all, nor Muse, their lay  
    Yet took my boyhood’s ear ; and glad would I  
The songsters’ selves in their own realm survey.”

    This my guide promises me.

Discoursing thus from the hyacinthine hill  
    Down by the plain we passed, where rippling wound  
Seaward in liquid light a narrow rill ;  
Such home by Borneo’s shores or Java’s sound  
    O’erbowered by branching green, the fisher lone  
’Mid brackish streams and sweet has often found.  
Behind, bright leaves and flowery perfume blown  
    By summer’s panting breath ; before was rolled  
In measureless depths to sight time’s ocean zone.  
But these and those betwixt, on textured gold  
    ’Mid the moist grass outspread, an artful tale  
Of loveless love the bard of Arquia told.  
As mirrored flame in ice the radiance pale  
    O’er face and forehead shone ; and still the song  
Rang falsely sweet, a mourner’s purposed wail.  
With laurel crowned, chiefest his peers among,  
    In spangled vesture decked, a prince he sate ;  
And at his feet in chequered shade the throng  
With silver trump and lute and harp elate  
    His praise extol, who erst the \*o’er\*-laboured rhyme  
With thought inwove, a coronal intricate.  
Others on grassy banks, where flowering thyme  
    Thick under-carpet made, in shepherd guise

Played with old fancies of Arcadian prime.  
 Of pastoral loves they told, rank's rivalries,  
 With hopes and joys and fears that best the glade  
 Or village cot present \*with\* new disguise,  
 Blended with nature's truth ; a paradise made  
 Nor wholly false nor real ; an Eden dream,  
 From toil repose, from storm a guardian shade :  
 Till from Trinacria's<sup>1</sup> shores and Ladon's<sup>2</sup> stream

Lured to Ausonia,<sup>3</sup> thronged who first and best  
 Tuned to Libethrian notes<sup>4</sup> the sylvan theme,  
 Bion with Moschus joined, and thou, the guest

Of Hiero<sup>5</sup> known, but more of Pan ; thy lay  
 For a lost Syrinx charmed the God's unrest.  
 And those whom the chill North's discoloured day

Yet reared, pale flowerets from the common blight  
 Exempt, a distant sun's declining ray,  
 By Windsor's storied banks,<sup>6</sup> or Cumbrian height,

When with faint \*morn\* the enchantress Geraldine  
 Broke the numb stillness of the April night.<sup>7</sup>

Now slack the strings and weak, severed the line  
 That present bound with past :

For that fair vine is now leafless and sapless.

O fallen from thy free self, O ill protected

From the brute swarms of spoil, dear Italy !

Beauty and art and love's true lore rejected

By earth's degenerate sons, awhile in thee

Their refuge found and home ; but all too brief

The respite given, by jealous destiny,

<sup>1</sup> Sicily.      <sup>2</sup> A river in Arcadia.      <sup>3</sup> Here used for *Sicily*.

<sup>4</sup> Notes of the Muses.

<sup>5</sup> Theocritus.

<sup>6</sup> Pope's *Pastorals*.

<sup>7</sup> Possibly a vague reference to the song of Fitztravers of Naworth upon the legend of Lord Surrey's Geraldine (*Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Canto vi.)

Short day, short joy ; too long the night, the grief,  
 The foul disguise, the wasted lives, the shame,—  
 Slave to each lord, prize to each neighbour thief ;  
 Till, once Imperial hailed, thy ancient name  
 Was for a byword known, and all thy praise  
 Turned to contempt, to foul reproach thy fame.  
 Alas the hundred Tales,<sup>1</sup> alas the lays  
 Lombard and Tuscan heard, alas the joy,  
 The pageant pomp, the boast of golden days,—  
 Ill-omened mirth, when he, the victim toy<sup>2</sup>  
 Of Nature's bounds outpast, foreshowed in death  
 Arts that unman, perfections that destroy.  
 All these before me passed, 'mid the hot breath  
 Of incense steamed from gold, and stifling scent  
 Of lily and rose, and Arno's violet wreath,  
 With priestly censers mixed ; and 'mid them went  
 The artist despot prince,<sup>3</sup> of Cosmo's line  
 Noblest and vilest in one purpose blent.

†       \*       \*       \*       †

Proteus of infinite form, thy mind a chord  
 Of magic range ; now tuned to hymns divine,  
 To Bacchic orgies now ; vassal and lord,  
 Despot and child of thy loved town, the spell  
 Of Cosmo thine, most cherished, most abhorred.

†       \*       \*       \*       †

To the lone child of Yemen's sunburnt clan,  
 From Dahra . . . bound, where the red waste  
 Shuts on his little life its limitless span,  
 Nor shrub nor bush nor waymark there ; effaced

<sup>1</sup> Boccaccio's *Decamerone* ; perhaps also the earlier *Cento Novelle Antiche* may be alluded to.

<sup>2</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>3</sup> Lorenzo de' Medici.

All but the desert's self, as from the deep  
Pass the light tracks by merchant venture traced ;  
And from his burning noon-tower steep by steep

Blood-red the day declines, but reckoning none  
Of hours or bird or beast is there to keep ;  
Then where in measureless light the tyrannous sun

Curtains his westward slope, till sands and skies,  
Distant and near, in that vast blue are one,  
Sudden in stateliest hues of rainbow dyes

Compact, a landscape spreads, with grove and palm,  
Palace and dome, before the wanderer's eyes,  
And winding lakes with glassy coolness charm

His fevered sense, and pastures green, that tell  
Of tended herds and flocks secure from harm ;  
These he beholds, and close before a well

Some little bower with coolness filled, that seems  
Almost in reach, so strong the illusive spell ;  
Till as the marge he nears, the fount, the streams,

Palace and grove and field from sense and sight  
Fade, as from opening eyelids \*inmost\* dreams :—  
So passed thy dream Ausonia ! last delight

And best to earth allowed ; nor following time  
The shattered vase may from its dust unite.  
From Hellas first transfused Ausonia's clime

That beauty made her own, the light, the glow  
Where Pleasure \*nursed\* her flower in full-grown prime ;  
Till burst the Helvetian storm, the robber foe,

Gaul's locust swarm accursed,<sup>1</sup> and leagued with hell  
In fire and blood the dark Iberian woe ;<sup>2</sup>  
Till o'er waste field and tenantless cities fell

Silent and blank the night, a leaden gloom  
Nor star might pierce nor lighted torch dispel.  
Yet shall the dawn, . . . , return, the doom

<sup>1</sup> The invasions from Switzerland and France at close of fifteenth and beginning of sixteenth centuries.

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish rule in Italy.

For better years make place, nor Italy  
Be but a desolate shrine, a shattered tomb ;  
Yet nor her bowers, nor aught the sunlit sky,

Encircling folds of earth, again may bear  
That pleasure flower, the rose of springs gone by.  
And green outspreads the garden leaf ; but there

Blossom is none, nor joy ; nor laughing Faun  
Hides 'mid the boughs as erst, nor Oread fair.

Ended the joy, the feast ; the Arcadian lawn

Herdless and shepherdless spreads ; in vain they rove  
Seeking who is not there, the god withdrawn

To his own shrine, Love absolute made in Love.

## CANTO XXII

Follows now a lifeless land : all I have passed through vanishes from consciousness—We descend to the sea : my guide bids me cleanse my face : then all the past of my pilgrimage returns before me—He speaks of the ascent from the imperfect to perfection—I see the supreme Palace of Love, and Earth's false attractions below ; a flickering scene, beyond which the vision of the Star of absolute Light is for a moment allowed me.

ON the lone margin of the utmost strand  
We stood, my guide and I ; for void of all  
That joyed or grieved was the here tenantless land ;  
Nor beauty's late seen form ; nor answering call  
Of song to song, nor pleasure's rainbow wing  
Might the lost days of vanished \*life\* recall ;  
But yellow sands, where shrub nor herb nor thing  
That kinship even remotest claimed to mind  
Or sense ; and speckless blue the ocean ring.  
Not equinoctial seas, when wave and wind,  
Curtained with sunlight, sleep, more lonely still ;  
A blank, a fullness ; life with death entwined.  
[As] on wide-bosomed lake or gliding rill,  
Where in quick sparkling smiles of cheerful play  
With joy instinct and life the waters thrill,  
If from black Boreal caverns far away  
Is breathed the wintry North, to ice congealed



All that bright mirror lifeless spreads and grey ;  
So of the secret shown, the depths unsealed

Late to my venturous gaze, the joys, the pain,  
The self, long years unknown, to self revealed,  
All then told and untold, from heart and brain

Had passed, a blank, a void ; nor memory there  
Nor thought, to conscious image might remain.

But he, the guardian power, whose constant care

Failed not, whate'er my need, on mine his hand  
In guidance laid, as down the cushioned stair  
Of grassy slopes we passed and terraced sand ;

Where of that circling sea with even stroke  
As sleeper's pulse the ripple beat the strand,  
Nor movement else nor sound the silence broke.

My guide explains that our path henceforward is beyond  
the pale of human mind : He leads me on :

So at long journey's close who hastes to greet

The haunt of evening rest, by hedge and tree  
Quickens his tread where opes the village street.

Then, where our steps by the unresting sea

Were stayed, again he spoke ; "In time and space  
This the fulfilment of thy fate's decree.

But first in the pure wave thy brow and face,

With travel stained and the dense airs that brood  
O'er penal depths, cleanse from unmeet disgrace.

So with clear sight, and vigour fresh renewed,

May'st thou the brightness bear, the forms that shine  
Symbols and reflex of the absolute Good."

I obey his command, and past pain and toil are  
obliterated.

So from my heart and brain the weight that lay

In numbness dark and cold, by the hid power

Of that pure wave dissolving passed away.

And all heard or beheld from that first hour

In the lone \*vale\* even to the utmost bound

Where now we stood, as from some giant tower

On a bare height upraised the landscape round

Map-like out-portioned lies, so clear dispread

As in one view the . . . coil unwound.

Not tangled now but clear life's single thread

In purposed mazes ran, and upward ever

Crooked or straight the innumerable texture led.

As swift and deep, his roadway cross, a river

The horseman forward bars ; for bridge or ford

Around he strains his eyes in vain endeavour ;

Or as the knot that save the Gordian sword,

Nought could resolve ; or as the word unspoken

Alone could ope the spell-intrusted hoard,

So with vain toil of thought in all the token

Of first and last I sought, where the long chain

Linked world with world in circling coil unbroken.

I ask an explanation :

"And thus," the answer came, "the life that was

Or is, or yet shall be, from simplest mood

Through complex form to the absolute life must pass.

These souls remain till purged by the fire of vengeful love.

As by warm sunbeams pierced at morn retire

Thin mists from lake and hill, so the keen ray

Of love revealed scatters dull earth's desire ;

Or as the vigorous swimmer casts away

What yet th' unpractised limbs upheld, so these

Rise from the imperfect to the perfect way.

But first the threefold zone of circling seas

The visioned bark must pass, till reached the shore,

"Where sits the guardian of the golden keys."  
 Thus having spoke, his words he stayed ; nor more  
     Needed of speech or sign ; so wide, so clear  
 The unlimited vision stretched my eyes before.  
 And from Life's basement courses, tier by tier  
     Upmounting to the lordliest pinnacle,  
 Love's palace towers o'erpeered the outmost sphere.  
 While far beneath, as in some mouldering cell  
     Flutters the spider's web, outstretched I saw,  
 By time and space cross-woven, earth's vexing spell.  
 O all-ensnaring net, of skill to draw  
     Whate'er its mesh enfolds, with personal life  
 Connatal thou,

†            \*            \*            \*            †

O life of death compact, O priceless gold  
     Deep-veined in granite doom, O diamond heaven  
 Marred by dull earth and darkness manifold !  
 †As who through formless clouds by tempest riven  
     Of phantom lights and shades, † upgazing sees  
 The untroubled splendours of the circling Seven,  
 Nor the mad railings of the storm, nor seas  
     Dashed in tumultuous spray, nor hail-blent rain  
 May stain the brightness of that starry peace ;  
 So the great calm of Love's all-circling reign  
     Showed 'mid the phantom whirl, the shadowy war  
 Of flickering light and shades, that pass and stain ;  
 And these beyond, a luminous point, a star  
     Shone in the measureless depths, vivid and lone,  
 Centre and being of all things that are :  
 Semblance all else, or dark or bright ; it shone  
     Absolute light, keen, insupportable.

†            \*            \*            \*            †

O Light supreme, O self-subsistent, thou'

Art of all light and life the sum ! in thee  
Mirror and mirrored ray no difference know.  
Such was the vision, an instant seen, to me  
On the utmost verge allowed ; around, above,  
Then all was blank ; only the unfathomed sea  
Circling the realms of peace, the realms of Love.

## CANTO XXIII

A transformation into life and joy now seizes me—We stand on the shore, where lies a boat with sail, but no helm or steerer—A crowd of miserable beings who spurned Love gathers round and vanishes—Then the light reappears, and we pass mysteriously to the land of real Semblance—My guide sprinkles my brows, and I perceive things in their inmost being, in a vision of a crystal sea through which crimson flashes, with strange sounds of music.

Like Glaucus and Psyche I am transfigured into new life and gladness—We stand by the sea, whereon is a boat with sails but no helm—My guide encourages me to embark, but a mystic gloom darkens the shore : a vision, part a palace and part a tomb, is seen, with shapes of those whose name

EFFACED with their vain life has passed ; for praise  
Unworthy, self-adjudged ; unworthy blame.  
As one who unawares on noontide ways  
Some dwarf mis-shaped or foul deformity,  
Cripple or monster meets, his startled gaze  
Frowning averts, nor cares with curious eye  
But to prolong disgust ; so faint I turned  
From that vile crew's dishonoured memory.  
Then thus my guide ; “ Not vain nor idly learned  
The lesson taught by these, who the high prize

"Spurning of love, by love in turn are spurned.  
Leave them ; not this thy choice ; thy destinies  
Fulfilled await the crown, that on thy head

He wreathes who ne'er the promise made denies.  
Nor thou thy word deny." No more he said,  
But seaward signed the way, where like the morn

Dawned on the hills a silvery lustre spread.  
Smit by that light the phantom brood of scorn  
Faded as things that were not ; through the air

Sounds of light wings and joyous tones were borne.  
And full in front 'mid the bright splendour where  
Purest the silver shone, again as erst

Broke the keen light beyond all light's compare ;  
And in that . . 's \*creative\* radiance burst  
A vision on my sight, a happiness

As sight to blindness given, or drink to thirst ;  
That even now, in earth's exile, I bless  
That moment's boon allowed, the memory given

Solace and staff through this world's wilderness.  
But you whose venturous step awhile has striven  
Thus far on mine to tend, more closely now

Follow the track through \*net\* and semblance riven  
Even to the inmost truth ; and from the bough  
Of verse by art \*entwined,\* the mystic rose

Pluck while the guardian lords the boon allow.  
Yet though revealed the circling bloom that glows  
In crimson orbs of leaf, unthought, untold

Is the hid secret of the centre close.  
—But I where the great sea's encircling fold  
Girded the shadowy land, what next should be

Waited with hope by new fulfilment bold.  
Not long ; for as from watery pressure free  
Upsprings the imprisoned air, or climbing flame

Skyward, in flickering spires unceasingly,  
So from that semblance-land of praise or blame  
Portioned in seeming time, with my true guide

I passed to the great realm without a name.  
Unfelt by sense the passage ; undescried  
By ear, to ear untold ; for sense and seeing  
Discern not here, nor space nor time divide  
The personal bounds of life ; the laws decreeing  
To each a temporal form, are fused and lost  
In the keen radiance this of absolute being.  
"Nor thou, this line o'erpassed, this barrier crost,  
Canst aught perceive or know ; and must abide  
Blindest to light when light-illumined most.  
For this the eternal love that aid and guide  
Willed me to thee, has power conferred to show  
Through semblance real what truth unveiled would  
hide.  
For this from the bright fountain's central flow .  
With gathered drops thy eyes I touch, and make  
Powerful thy eyes to see, thy heart to know."

My guide, my star, now shines out in perfect glory, and  
sprinkles my eyes and brow with drops of flame,

And at the touch all wondrous things e'en now  
Viewless to my quenched sight, in clear display  
Did to my sense their inmost self avow.  
Not to the bard of Mantua's silver lay,  
Nor Arno's raptured seer, the Elysian field  
In \*fount\* and flower more aptly pictured lay  
Than to my eyes, by those bright dewes unsealed  
Was the hid . . . , the changeless extasy  
Beyond the veil in the veil's self revealed.  
And this the vision showed. A crystal sea  
Clearer than diamond fire, and through the mass  
A crimson radiance flashed incessantly,  
As wine through water seen, ere in the glass  
To one confused, or when bright cords along  
Electric fires in tremulous pulses pass.

But here to memory's task ill-matched my song

Fails from the marvels shown, as fails at need

The broken utterance of a stammering tongue.

Yet at thy word, O Love, my lines proceed

To climb, though weak themselves, yet urged by thee,

The difficult heights where thrones the eternal meed.

On the smooth mirror of that stormless sea

In our light boat we passed, where round the prow

That crimson radiance flashed incessantly.

And like strange sounds wood-wildered lovers know,

Heard through the golden leaves, from the far deep

Sweet sounds of music swelled in upward flow.

Like one whom trance enthrals, to restful sleep

Akin, yet diverse all, while heart and brain

O'er form and \*hue\* their watchful empire keep,

O'er the bright splendour of that liquid plain

So was I borne ; as on a mother's breast

Lies a loved child, of mere existence fain.

What next befell in sequent verse expressed

Shall my true song declare, so favouring prove

The vision's lord and mine ; my brother guest

At the great banquet of \*subsistent\* Love.



## CANTO XXIV

A voice sings the bliss of Renunciation of Pleasure—It is Saint Francis of Assisi—The truth of his doctrine ; his many followers—He recognizes them whencesoever they may come, the poor and wretched above all—But in this Love all created things have part.

“O HAPPY choice, that from earth’s sensuous toys  
Turned us to want and pain, and the vain shows  
Of earth made footstones to immortal joys ;  
The sweet for bitter draught, the offered rose  
We for the thorns resigned, for drink and feast  
Hunger and thirst, vigil and fast we chose.  
And as the process of the years increased  
Our burden self-imposed, its added load  
Heavier we made, when strength to bear was least.  
Nor solace cool of shade nor rest our road  
Gave to our toil-worn feet ; barren and lone  
The land we wended and the path we trode.  
For as the covering glories of the sun  
Each lesser light of heaven o’erveil, so wrought  
In us the primal Love, the Eterne, the One,  
That of nought else in earth or air the thought  
Might in our mind have place, but only He,  
Lord of our being, \*effaced\* the \*rest\* and \*wrought\*.  
And all on earth or air or sky or sea

"Pleasant to sense or mind, in His compare  
Was dross and dregs, and fraud and witchery.  
Therefore from all we turned, as turns despair

From the dead hope to that sole Love that is  
Truth of all loves that have been, are, or were.  
Therefore, for want and pain, the fadeless bliss  
Of absolute life is ours, and whom we loved  
Seals on our lips the individual kiss.

The false reproving, by the false reproved,  
Strangers on earth we fared, till th' open door  
Of this true rest received us and approved."

Such greeting words, as the clear waters o'er  
We passed, to me were borne, when at the sound  
I turned, the speaker's self and form t' explore.  
As by a meadowed plot of marshy ground

Of some rare flowers the purple majesty  
Rises, that lesser blooms in court surround,  
So through the watery floor and stainless sky  
Gathered unnumbered forms that \*circling\* made  
To one bright shape th' attendant galaxy ;  
Where in coarse garb of peasant guise arrayed,

Yet kingly none the less, in radiance pure  
Assisi's shame and glory stood displayed.  
Him whom nor threats to affray nor joys allure

Availed, nor kinship's claim, nor charms of home,  
†From† the great bliss in naked Love secure.  
For this, whate'er of price 'neath heaven's high dome

Is found, . . . he spurned, naked and bare<sup>1</sup>  
Content in that one quest through earth to roam.  
Till from Alverno's<sup>2</sup> height the herbless stone

With sudden roses blushed, and from on high  
Love's martyr-seal in fourfold radiance shone.  
And she,<sup>3</sup> bride of that seal, to passers-by

<sup>1</sup> Sic MS.

<sup>2</sup> Cell in the Apennines where S. Francis received the *Stigmata*.

<sup>3</sup> Poverty.

Long time reproach and shame, accepted now,  
Knit to his own her perfect poverty.

With the true wisdom well, O Francis, thou  
Show'dst the more excellent way ; of Eden life  
Thine with bare hand to pluck the fruitful bough.  
All other leaf, all fruit, thy provident knife,

Divided, left to fade ; from this to weave  
The singular wreath, crown of a conqueror's strife.  
As in the hour when warm the summer's eve

Broods o'er Parthenope's bay, the ready crowd  
Of home and household friends and kinship leave  
Oft unreturning take ; with wailing loud

And hopeful cry commixed, to sea they fare,  
As o'er the Atlantic wave a wind-driven cloud.  
For of \*deep\* lands and summer pastures fair

They the report have heard, and wisely bold  
The Here adventured for the promised There.  
So to the voice of happier realms that told,

To loss of these assigned, a countless band  
Their names obedient in those ranks enrolled ;  
And then by their great chief on either hand

Before me gathered stood, and each to each  
Was of new fire and light a kindling brand.  
I saw and inly thought ; "The furthest reach

Of all-embracing life, of joy that knows not  
Pause or defeat, the bliss denied to speech,  
Here is attained ; the lotus flower that grows not

On earth's dull lake, its bloom-enfolded treasure,  
Plighted to these, on other quest bestows not."

Then on me smiled that glorious form, and "Measure,"

He said, "by what thou seest, our sum, or make  
From \*heart's\* renounce the count of . . . less pleasure.  
And know whate'er the name for whose loved sake

Who love the narrow path contend and steep,  
They only all receive who all forsake.  
Not Europe's shrines nor Asian temples keep

"Their altar's mystic flame ; than fancied heavens more  
high <sup>1</sup>

Is the true lore, than creeds and priesthoods deep.

'Neath the pure blue of fair Ausonia's sky,

Or Syria's purple vault, or Indian glare

Of down-poured heat, or changeful canopy

Of China's worshipped heaven, the watchful care

Of all-embracing love has still provided

Who by this pathway pass, these garlands wear.

By system dimmed, by \*purblind\* sense derided,

In them the embodied truth abides, and [draws] <sup>2</sup>

Love's chosen few, by Love's own footsteps guided."

He ceased, and all that crowd with such applause

As on victorious chiefs a victor host

Bestows, and triumph song, made glad the pause.

Then I ; "O of all those flower and boast

Who in the Sign <sup>3</sup> have part, that from earth's ill

To the true life has mightiest drawn and most,

If but in love be life, and hatred still

The bane of love, say by what art the twain

Harmonious made, one perfect life fulfil ?

†            \*            \*            \*            \*

The stones our feet that bruise, the thorns that pain

Quick from a brother's path to move, nor less

On thy own pathway strew the torturing train." † <sup>4</sup>

With such a smile as bleakest wilderness

Might clothe with springing flowers, that patriarch  
chief

Disclosed the treasures of love's hid recess,

And thus ; "Heaven's scattered rays on grass or leaf

Their gentlest influence pour ; but, mirrored, burn

Of life-consuming darts a gathered sheaf.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps omit *mystic*.

<sup>2</sup> *Leads* in MS.

<sup>3</sup> The Cross.

<sup>4</sup> Uncertain if these three lines were intended to be spoken by  
S. Francis.

“ And the full stream poured from the Naiad’s urn,  
O’er level fields so gently flows, the eye  
Scarce from the ripple’s curve its course may learn,  
If chance [where] narrow banks and steep deny

The wider course, it pass, with torrent force  
The downward waters rage impetuously,  
That rocks nor trees nor moorland bounds its course

May unremoved abide ; the while in play  
An infant’s hand might bar the trickling source.  
So love from self unwed, from earth’s decay

By mere renouncement freed, its manifold stream  
To one contracts, to one bright fire its ray.  
But as whate’er the Sun’s diffusive gleam

Lightens, o’er earth outspread, is found  
Pictured and summed in each dividuous beam,  
So all that flies in air or moves on ground,

Or cleaves a watery way, proportionate part  
Has in the orb by love encircled round.  
But most whom pinching want, or the keen smart

Of pain, or deadlier wound \*detained\*, my choice  
Claimed as my own ; these of my heart the heart.  
*What done to these is done to me*, the voice

Heard of the incarnate Love, in loving deed  
Bade me, though . . . by personal foes, rejoice.  
Nor men alone but beasts of wood or mead,

And the swift birds of air, in them I knew  
Brothers and partners of love’s ample creed.  
Nor beasts alone and birds, but lives that flew

Careless on insect wings, and what the deep  
Engulphs, in love’s magnetic cords I drew.  
Nor these alone, but thin green leaves that keep

Their yearly task of shade, and silent flowers,  
And the piled fruits of Autumn’s golden heap,  
Were in His love beloved ; nor even the powers

Of earth and air and fire and flood, the wind,  
Sunbeams and storm and snows and hail and showers,

“ Were from that Love shut out ; in all the mind,  
    Eye to the heart, the eternal loveliness  
Beholds, to all beside fast closed and blind.  
Therefore upgathered in that love’s caress  
    Not many now but one ; th’ existence blent  
With our own joy, for ever blest we bless.”  
Thus as he spoke, the o’erarching element  
    To purest radiance changed, and a great noise  
As of innumerable harps in heard concert  
Like thunder loud ; yet . . . the higher voice  
    Uprose of songstress heard, the notes above  
Of quire or band orchestral, hailed the choice  
    That claimed for earth well-lost the unearthly Love.

## CANTO XXV

The guide announces our advance to higher regions—The lake now swarms with stars in mystic dance, which form a galaxy, wherein my guide, Canopus, is the central splendour—He explains that the perfect rest of the heavenly realm is three-fold : first, S. Francis and his followers : now, those who have completely lost self—Among the lights I now see Saint Theresa : her glory : she tells me who are with her.

STUNNED by the vehement triumph-cry, with sight

Quelled by th' excessive radiance, as in swoon

Awhile I lay, nor recked if swift the flight

Or slow of what earth's dream by sun or moon

Reckons as time ; but in the abiding Now

Vanish as shades in equinoctial noon.

Thus as I lay the master's hand my brow

Touched with reviving fingers, while his glance

Was on the waters at the gliding prow.

" From the first rapture of the extatic trance

Granted to sense and memory, onward yet

To further life and kinglier crown advance.

The tangling meshes of earth's . . . net,

And with love's staff who broke, and single-hearted

Past to the goal, have in thy view been set.

Now whom love's keener edge in life disparted

From worthier snares than these, in visioned wise

"Shall to thy sense be by this hour imparted."  
Then as in limitless depth of summer skies  
Light fleeces form at noon, till all the blue  
Is mottled o'er in vaporous fantasies ;  
So at the voice that spoke, the ocean view  
Of fleckless crystal late, a mere expanse,  
With myriad stars to bright confusion grew,—  
Atoms of keenest light in tangled dance  
That sharply flashed and moved ; and now they wheel  
In separate orbs, now in one line advance.  
From some high gallery seen as whirls the reel  
Of beauty's festal pride, when the high state  
Of courts on worth approved sets yearly seal.  
Nor speech nor thought was mine ; content to sate  
My eyes on the fair things, now singly clear,  
Now in one brightness mazed and aggregate.  
What next I saw to the uninitiate ear  
How shall my verse declare ? or how display  
Beauty unveiled to eyesight dimmed and blear ?  
Yet must the tale be told ; the sequent lay  
Heeded or not be sung ; so wills supreme  
He whom o'er all I love, in all obey.  
As in the changes of a midnight dream  
When verges night to morn, the forms of sleep  
New form, new movement take, as changed the theme  
In which they share, yet their main semblance keep ;  
So those bright globes of light, whose glittering play  
Rose from the . . . of the visioned deep :  
For now as by one throb, each separate ray  
Grew to a rounded disc, as buds of spring  
Start into flowers at touch of amorous May.  
And in the centre of each luminous ring,  
But drawn in hues of light, for tint or shade  
Here may nor form express or shadow fling,  
A face, a likeness shone, a form arrayed  
In light's diaphanous shine ; of youthful prime,



Female or male, the living form pourtrayed.  
A heaven of living stars, a chime

To music's heart attuned ; a garden set  
With flowers of every season, every clime,  
Or diamond gems circled with emerald fret,—

So showed that happy throng, inwoven there,  
Of absolute Life befitting coronet.

Then as at signal given the pageant rare

Changed, and those forms of beauteous portraiture  
Again in keenest light infolded were.

Nor could my sight, though strengthened most, endure,—

For mortal sense t' immortal truth unequal  
Must still remain,—that light's effulgence pure.  
Nor were my words to those high marvels equal,

Could they acceptance find ; but as a tongue  
Not understood fail of the promised sequel.

This, however, is not the defect of the guide who inspires  
me.

And now those countless lights that swift and free

Like furnace-sparks were seen, from every side  
Converging shone a steadfast galaxy ;

Till of that dazzling zone the starry guide

Worshipped of men, when in Egyptian story

O'er Libya's vale Canopus throned in pride ;

Now o'er Antarctic seas and lonesness hoary

With glacier-snows up-piled, the hero prow<sup>1</sup>

He steers, of Austral night supremest glory ;

To his own form and self transfigured now

The central splendour shone ; and all the rest  
Were as a halo to that kingly brow.

Then thus he spoke ; "The love, the joys exprest

In those thou seest, than those beheld of late

In fuller life and nobler stand confest.

<sup>1</sup> See Book I. Canto i. l. 115.

“ And know of absolute rest the perfect state,  
Perfect in each, yet sequent in degree,  
By threefold grade is given to contemplate.  
They who from earthly goods naked and free  
With the great chief Alverno's<sup>1</sup> mount ascended,  
Are first, and outmost of the \*encircling\* three.  
But higher those who, as Love willed, attended  
On earth by Love's elect, from first to last  
By that high aid as thou by me befriended,  
Have with long toil and pain the bound o'erpast  
That sunders self from self, and in the Eterne,  
Not in themselves, their part and portion cast.”  
Then I ; “ Of this high meed, and those who earn  
By toil or birthright place, not haply strange  
E'en to my hope, more would I gladly learn.”  
But he ; “ 'Mid the bright lives that moving range  
From height to height, to whom thou will'st, thy  
prayer  
Address, nor fear reply's denied exchange.”  
As who on some high feast a palace stair  
Untrod before ascends, with anxious glance  
'Mid countless faces strange and torches' flare  
Some friendly form to see,—sweet countenance  
With welcome of familiar smile ; so I  
On those keen splendours gazed, if so perchance  
Might memory question aid or prompt reply.  
But memory none nor sign ; nor keenest sight  
Of mutual knowledge there could aught descry.  
Then more than ruby red, than diamond bright,  
Where densest shone the clustered orbs, a ray  
Changed to clear noon the darkness of my night.  
And, as from central heaven downpoured, a day  
On day's uprising dawned ; such beauty there  
O'ershone the brightness of its crowned display.  
O flower of perfect Love, O fairest fair,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Book II. Canto xvii. l. 120.

Iberia's boast and earth's, Theresa, thine  
The form, the life, the grace, the granted prayer.  
And thine the phoenix-heart by love divine

Transformed, consumed, renewed ; and thine the  
wreath

Knit by the clusters of the mystic vine.  
Pleasure in pain, in torture, joy in death ;

The plant, the flower of life, was thine ; to thee  
Alike the heights above, the depth beneath.  
O all-perfuming flower, O Eden tree

Fruitful of better life, what happy fate  
Gave me thy power t' approach, thy glory see !  
As a young Queen and fair in maiden state

Smiles on the suppliant throng, the while intent  
They on her glance as birds on heaven wait :  
Ev'n with such regal smile on me was bent

In pitying love that face, whose beauty none  
Excels of all that deck love's firmament.

And as with sound of rippling streams in one  
Blend sweetest notes of song's accord, a voice  
Gave to the ear delight by the eye begun.

And thus the message came ; " Brother, rejoice

In what this second realm unfolds for those  
Who, chosen of Love, made of that Love their choice.  
He, the deep centre of the eternal rose ;

The circling petals they ; from him their scent,  
From him the hue that cheers, the fire that glows.  
Till inmost self, connatal element

Of space-conditioned life, in that which most  
From self abhors, was all consumed and spent.  
Here the true rest and fullness ; this the boast

Of death annulled by life ; made perfect here  
Banner and guerdon of Love's conquering host."  
Thus while she spoke, the canopied atmosphere

One common glory shone ; and with the glow  
Reddened the triple depths of that still mere.

Till as in vaulted shrines when organs blow

To hymns of choral praise, such music sweet  
Filled th' intermediate space with honeyed flow  
Of sound's intensest thrill, that now my feet

Failed where I stood, and o'er my eyes a shade  
Darkened, and ceased the mortal heart to beat,  
By joy's excessive load crushed and o'er-weighed,

And self in vision lost :—such welcome prove  
They who by earth's long torment perfect made,  
Burn in the fires of all-consuming Love.

## CANTO XXVI

All vanish save S. Theresa—She reveals that many paths from many nations lead to this kingdom—Spirits from the first five realms can reach it ; those from the sixth and seventh only after long re-births ; whilst other lower souls seem to be excluded—She passes, casting a regenerating ray upon me—I have the vision of the Head of the Saviour—Then another ray from my guide transports me to the highest sphere.

ROUSED from that swooning trance by touch of him,  
My spirit's strength and guide, upwards again  
I looked, nor dazzled now my sight nor dim ;  
But as quenched stars at dawn that glorious train  
Now faint and far was seen, or as the ring  
That shrouds heaven's queen from \*menaced\* storm and  
rain.

Only that loveliest Form,<sup>1</sup> fountain and spring  
Of Carmel's renovate streams, as one fair dove  
That bides, its comrades flown, with folded wing,  
Yet to depart delayed ; a mother's love  
Was in her eyes, but on her queenly brow  
Throned the vast wisdom of the gods above.  
Then spoke my guide ; "What mortal suits to know  
Freely demand of her ; for this the grace  
Granted awhile, nor thou the gift forgo."

<sup>1</sup> S. Theresa, who founded the Reformed Carmelites or *Descalzos*.

As in a glass who fronting stands may trace

Things then behind him far, so clear I knew  
My inmost thought mirrored in that bright face,  
Yet to our nature's laws obedience true.

With question asked and answered, draught by  
draught,

Waters of life from that pure fount I drew.

And thus ; " Upon life's tree the fruitful graft

If of its nature one, I fain would learn  
From the great mistress of love's plastic craft.  
And if the lonely cell and order stern

Be to these heights sole path, or other way  
Lead through earth's lowlands to the summit bourne."  
Then with pleased smile of earnest mixed with play,

As o'er her questioning child a mother's look  
Is bent, while kisses yet her words delay ;  
So from the living leaves of that fair book

By love's own finger writ, with tenderness  
Of dallying pause these sounds my hearing took.

†   \*   \*   \*   †

" Then know, to this pure life's serenest height

Many the paths, not one ; though speediest still  
The narrower way close fenced by cloistered rite.  
To me that path assigned, by heaven-taught skill

New fenced, new paved, new guarded, stair by stair  
I brought to the summit of the \*ambrosial\* hill.

Happy, with me that path who choose, though rare

Who close my footsteps tread ; more rare who climb  
Through dust and mist of earth to the upper air.

But to no race confined nor creed nor clime

Is the strait path of love, . . .

†   \*   \*   \*   †

To the great King with anguish crowned, whose throne  
On self dethroned is reared, whoe'er their track

"Have set, open to these, and these alone.

And some from the great hero-town that hath

Its gates by the bright gardens where delayed

Thy earlier steps ; they whom the envious wrath

Of the rude crowd and treason, undismayed,

True to love's compass-star, through blood and tears

Whiter than snow their ruddy garments made.

And some, though few their numbered tale, whose years

'Mid toils of court and camp, senate and field,

Taught them hid lore of the extra-solar spheres,

Where not to sense nor time nor space revealed

Is the unconditioned life ; the realm from far

They saw, the word they read, the scroll unsealed.

But more who through earth's dust the ethereal car

Of Art triumphant bore, till their own art

For things that seem gave them the things that are ;

And for the cunning brain informed the heart

With perfect form and grace, till the whole man

Grew of the imaged life himself a part.

And as some acted play, that sport began,

Haply to earnest turns, so these with truth

Filled up the mimicked outline of truth's plan.

More numerous yet the band whom bitter ruth

Of love by earth made void, like him beloved

Of love, has torn with Erymanthian tooth.

These with earth's brightest flowers inwove have proved

Earth's keenest venom-thorns ; and each in turn

Have a false phantom found, a thing reproved.

Now clear of dregs and soil the purified urn ;

Of self made self-less now, with the pure oil

Pressed from the life-tree's fruit, as stars they burn.

So late with weeds o'ergrown the furrowed soil

The riche[r] harvest bears, than the loose dust

Barren alike to man's neglect or toil.

And joined with these, nor numerous less, their trust

Who in the symbol placed ; till love's own flower

"Grew, and aside the earthy covering thrust.  
They who of Hellas born, th' Olympic power<sup>1</sup>

Of Elis' \*shrine\* revered, or answer sought  
From old Dodona's grove, or Pythian bower ;  
Or by the lore on Syria's mountains taught

Shaped a more excellent way, or to the shrine  
Of Heaven's pure Queen their votive offerings brought.  
And where o'er Indian streams and palm-groves shine

Towered fanes of ancient faith, and the far East  
From Western greed secure guards th' ocean-line :—  
All these through imaged form from form released,

Have at one table sate ; a different bowl  
Each grasped ; but one the nectar, one the feast.  
They too who on pure limbs the Delphic stole

Have robed of spotless white, and in high verse  
Have writ their name on great Apollo's scroll,  
Or the plumed pomp of History's pictured hearse

Have led from age to age ; or what, possess  
By man, may help to sain man's primal curse,  
Have taught or striven to teach ; or meed of rest

Passionless, and fair life, fit recompense  
Have of their toil, with their own blessings blest.  
But not with these, not these, whose vain pretence

Of science false[ly] named, and arts that kill,  
Has hope from life divided, truth from sense ;  
Nor they, though less removed, whom sensuous will

In fading roses binds,—not theirs assigned  
The all-circling rest, nor th' empyrean hill.  
For drink the Danaid sieve, for food the wind ;

Life's phantom-fruit is theirs, \*till\* birth on birth  
Renewed, the stains have cleansed, the dross refined.  
With them, who from illusive forms of earth

Sought real heaven to frame, and nature's wail,  
Ill-attuned revellers, mocked with songs of mirth :  
And whom the twilight wood, and whom the vale

<sup>1</sup> The famous statue of Zeus by Phidias.



"Of spectre-tombs retains ; and the great mass  
 By blame as praise rejected, and the tale  
 Of names in water writ ; as shades on glass  
 Mirrored, or the light dust of summer heat,  
 Circling or blown transverse the eddies pass."  
 Here paused her voice ; and as full quires repeat  
 The single note foregone, with answer loud  
 Of triumph rang the circling joy complete.  
 And as in zenith heavens a fleecy cloud  
 Melts in the infinite blue, so passed away  
 With their bright Queen [from] sight the attendant  
 crowd.  
 But as she passed, even then a singular ray  
 From her own burning heart that glorious one  
 Darted on him, the guardian of my way ;  
 And from a lake's calm surface as the sun  
 Reflex his image sends, so in my heart  
 Was lit the flame erst in those hearts begun.  
 And such desire as spoken words t' impart  
 Awaits not, thrilled my breast, and,—a quick throe,—  
 Life tore from life and self from self a part.  
 Nor personal sense could reach, nor thought could know  
 That unconditioned bliss, where several being  
 Is lost, as gold in sevenfold furnace glow.  
 But then connatal love, by heaven's decreeing  
 My guide even to the end, in harmony  
 As of twin stars his will with mine agreeing,  
 Thus to th' unsyllabled question made reply,  
 And said ; "The boundless love, the rest supreme,  
 Will not thy just desire, dear friend, deny.  
 But save by those who from the illusive dream  
 Of time and space made free, . . .

†            \*            \* .            \*            †

. . . in sorrow lost and pain,

"Not for themselves but others, none the height  
Thou seek'st, though almost won, may hope t' attain."  
Thus while he spoke, his pointing hand my sight

Guided to midmost heaven, where overhead  
Glowed the great convex with intensest light,  
And vaster now than vastest heaven outspread ;

Now a keen star-like point it gemmed ; and now  
Brightness at one with darkness, hope with dread.  
And in its midst what seemed a kingly brow

With anguish crowned and empire vast had home,  
One with the light, yet twinned, I knew not how.  
As on thy night of nights, eternal Rome,

From far the pilgrim views in raptured gaze  
Now crimson all, now white, the Titan dome ;<sup>1</sup>  
So with swift change, unchanging yet, the rays

Of that great glory shone, that even delight  
Was not, all thought effaced in mere amaze.  
Not long ; for he, my vision's guide, in sight

To the vision's self transformed, on me, so long  
His guarded charge, a shaft of purest light  
From where he stood those secret joys among

Darted, that swift to highest height above  
Bore me, that witness here might crown the song  
Wreathed for the feast where thrones the bridegroom  
Love.

<sup>1</sup> The illumination of the cupola upon S. Peter's day.

## CANTO XXVII

A Hymn to our Blessed Lord as God and Man by my guide, who commends me now to His guidance—I see inexpressive marvels, and the ultimate vision of Divine Love in the form of Man.

“GODHEAD and Manhood thou, limitless Life  
In personal form here shown, of perfect peace  
Maker and Lord, girt with the sword of strife ;  
Noted of all, possessing all, †th’ increase† ;  
Throne of all visible things, yet all to thee  
Lighter than down blown by the autumn breeze ;  
Grief’s keenest pangs, joy’s highest ecstasy  
Are thine, in thy deep calm ; the sheltering breast  
Where all are one with love, and love with thee.  
The infinite want, the fierce desire, the quest  
Of unattained desire, in thee alone  
Centered, fulfilment find and absolute rest.  
A name of many names the crystal stone  
Bound in thy diadem tress ; but each to them  
Whom to thy likeness chosen thou know’st, is known.  
And others there are at thy vesture’s hem ;  
Of these are we, thy suppliants ; Child of earth  
He who before thee bends ; to me of heaven  
Glory and singular star assigned from birth.  
Him from life’s promise-dawn to the dim even  
Of joyless age, through trial years of sadness  
My hand has led ; with his my spirit striven.  
Each grade of conscious life, from the dark madness  
Of self informed with crime, to the pure day  
Of love through torment perfect made in gladness,  
His upward path has wound ; nor further way -

"Is to my guidance given ; the rest is thine ;  
Thine the great vision ; thine the guiding ray ;

The gate, the palace-throne, the all-fruitful vine  
Whose clusters glad the universe, that knows  
Itself in thee, as thou thyself divine."

From far, so seemed it, as a wind that blows  
Through the wood to us that voice was borne ; but I  
Knew in those words my vision's granted close.

And as in upward gaze unspoke reply  
Of grateful mind I made, a sense unknown  
To nature's self informed my heart and eye.

The eternal Now, the all-present Here, the throne  
Of self-existent light, the happiness  
Of limitless life, the rose-encircling zone,

Were visible there ; yet for that sight the less  
To speech proportioned they ; for symbols none,  
Finite themselves, may infinite things express.

And as bent eyes, how keen soe'er, the sun  
Beheld, to darkness turn, and gazing more  
Less apprehend, by their own sight o'erdone ;

Or who some singular strain, long years before  
Heard, would to mind recall ; but . . . never  
Can the one note from other notes restore ;

So I to earth returned, with vain endeavour  
In words of earthy mould the marvel tell  
That from earth's sight the unlifted curtains sever.

Yet some may understand ;

Many there are who run the race ; yet each

But to his proper mark attains ; and few  
Who the high goal, love's crowning summit, reach.  
The manifold mesh of life, the form, the hue

Pictured in pictured space, of these whate'er  
Captive the affection leads, or glads the view,  
All lovely things in ocean, earth, or air,

All joy of laughing youth, all empery,

By love and life wrought out in death's despair ;  
All joy of mortal skill, all harmony

Woven in the webs of sound ; all fairest flowers  
That glad the mead, all rainbow vaults of sky ;  
Not in their semblant show, but as the powers

Of which the vesture they, the substance hid  
Whence are those shadows thrown, that build the powers  
Of life's apparent home, but here amid

The eternal light, one with that light, revealed  
In their own selves, to human view forbid :  
And every deed of honoured memory, sealed

By Love's approving seal ; and more by time  
Or envious guile from later days concealed ;  
But most the martyr-love by hatred's crime

Victor in love confessed, and from the abyss  
Of worst endured in passionate faith sublime ;—  
These in that splendour glowed, where all that is

Its ultimate meaning finds, where thrones supreme  
Love blent with love in universal kiss.

—O First and Last, Sun of all worlds, thy beam

Is light and truth and love ; their fountain-head  
Is in thy orb ; to thee returns their stream.  
All separate life, all personal love, is dead

. . . or confront with thine ; our sight between  
And thy true vision the thick darkness spread.  
O all-transforming vision, an instant seen,

Then for a night withdrawn, till the true morn  
Scatter earth's hated night, dissolve the screen !  
Yet though exiled the while, not all forlorn

Am I, nor shall this verse thy glory's praise,  
Perish, an \*empty\* . . . , a theme outworn.  
Once loved, for ever loved ; nor hours nor days

Have o'er love's fabric power, the form its fire  
Has stamped, changeless itself, all change outstays.  
Nor from that vision seen [will] heart's desire

Turn to aught else its eyes, or from the height

Where now I stood to other height aspire.  
As joys the bridegroom when the expected night  
Gives to his loving arms the bride ; as joys  
The mother-bride at her first babe's first sight ;  
Nor the full cup o'erflows the marge, nor cloy  
The satiate sense, nor more is there nor less,  
Nor other draught the ambrosial fount alloys.  
So from that orb of perfect loveliness

Nor truth nor love nor life divide ; for [all]  
Diverse in name, one absolute good express.  
As who on Pisgah's height, or the great wall  
Of Darien's Titan ridge, or erst who stood  
On th' Euxine cliffs escaped from Persian thrall,  
And their long toils and anxious fears, in mood  
Of rest secure, surveyed, and more and more  
Gazing, the assurance of their sight renewed ;  
Yet with more keen intent, as when a store  
Of infinite gems and gold the wondering eye  
Greets, I that vision's secret sought t' explore ;  
Nor vainly sought ; for to the voiceless cry

Of my too eager love, in answer came  
For dimness sight, for want satiety ;  
And from mid fires as when some sudden flame  
Shoots a keen flash, so to my inmost view  
At once revealed the ultimate vision came.  
Not that the Eternal Life or old or new

Admits, or shadow of change ; but now my sense  
Quickened by love, to full attainment grew.  
Then in the midmost orb, where most intense  
That visioned radiance glowed, a Shape there showed  
Of a Man's likeness, an Omnipresence  
In human form subsistent ; such it glowed,  
Light of the encircling light, the central core  
Of the great glory from that fount o'erflowed.  
This I beheld pourtrayed, and wondered more  
Whose that bright form and whence ; fain to discern

What the far meaning, what the imaged lore.  
But as faint outlined on the horizon sky

Some distant sail, just seen, or outlined coast,  
The more we gaze, the more eludes the eye ;  
So now distinct now blurred, that vision crossed

Or seemed to cross my sight ; till my whole thought  
Faltered, in quick desire perplexed and lost.  
Till perfect now the Love that in me wrought

Unveiled the impersonate truth displayed ; the Life  
That to all life life and deliverance brought ;  
In whom closed was the breach ; th' envenomed knife

Of death to healing made, healed the deep wound,  
Nor will with will, nor self with self at strife.  
And for great Nature's secular wail, a sound

Of infinite harps to separate harmony  
Attuned, and the great goal's extremest bound.  
This the pre-ordinate end, the purpose high

Of Love through all diffused, from all again  
Centered and bound in personality.

Not wavering now nor faint, but without stain

Pictured in dazzling light, the Form I knew  
Whose beauty draws all life, whose hands contain.  
Me too those hands contained, that beauty drew

Never to sunder more ; in him the want  
Summed and complete ; the vision sealed and true.  
This the pre-ordinate rest ; this the great Mount

Where thrones the changeless Life, whose heights above  
Are as his depths beneath ; hence flows the Fount,  
Hither returns, of th' all-encircling Love.

JAN. 31, 1888.

L.D.

End of the Vision of Life











